

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM

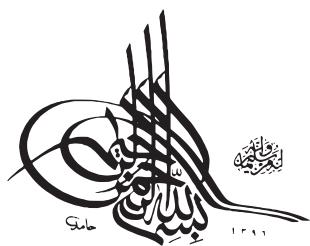
Rumi

Rahmatullah-i Alayh



Osman Nûri TOPBAŞ





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The great saint Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) uses the following words to announce to the world that the source of the wisdom and mysteries deep within his heart, is the Qur'an and Sunnah:

من بندۀ قرآنم اکر جان دارم
من خاک ره محمد مختارم
کر نقل کند حزاین کس از گفتارم
بیز ارم ازو زین سخن بیز ارم

“As long as my soul abides in this skin, I am a slave to the Qur'an; and the dust of the sacred path of Muhammed (pbuh), the Chosen One.

“Should anyone report from me the slightest word to the contrary, I am forever distant from both him and his word!..”

FOREWORD

Eternal thanks and praise to the Almighty Allah who brought us into existence from nothing -even though we did not pay any dues-, created us as 'human beings' among countless other species, honoured us with Islam and belief and has given us the joy of being part of the community of his beloved Prophet (pbuh), made us beneficiaries of the book of guidance the Qur'an, and provided us with the opportunity to benefit from the teachings of scholars and saints, who are the inheritors of the prophets.

An endless greeting to our greatest guide in this life and sole refuge for intercession in the next, the beloved Prophet Muhammed (pbuh), as well as his pure family and companions.

Some people are forgotten while still alive, while others bring hearts to life despite having been dead for centuries. Regardless of the time that elapses, they will never be gone or forgotten.

These are saints, or '**friends of Allah**', who have tapped into the secret of the eternal life by annihilating their mortal existences in the presence of their Lord and are the true inheritors of prophets who live their religion with love. They are people of wisdom who have perfected their morals and conduct through the inspiration of the Qur'an and Sunnah. They are model characters for those not given the privilege of seeing the Prophet's (pbuh) distinguished companions.

The graves of saints are inside the hearts of believers. Although their mortal corpses have lain buried for centuries, through their inspiring works from the heart, not only have they affected our times, they will also continue to guide people eager to take the path of truth for a long time to come. Long after their departure from earth, they have been honoured with a sec-

ond life inside people's hearts, simply for having realised the reality of '*dying before death*'.

One such friend of Allah whom the Lord graced with enlightening hearts with an influence that transcends time, is **Mevlana Jalaladdin Rumi**.

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) is an inviter to Islam and a skilled doctor of the heart.

His call and its echoes are a cure for diseases that cripple the heart until the end of time.

He is a caller to a divine reunion, which will never grow old and whose effects will last forever.

His spiritual invitation will remain forever young, as wonderfully explained in his ageless elegy, the *Mathnawi*:

"When you see the eternal river of life, pour into it the water of life from inside your cup. How can water ever flee the river?"

"When the water in the cup mixes with the river, it is freed from its own existence and becomes the river."

"And once that happens, its attributes depart and only its essence remains. From then onward, it will neither decrease nor smell nor become polluted."

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) (1207-1273) casts an eternal light on the timeless realities concerning the wonder we call the human being. The content and style of his works have therefore lost nothing of their relevance. Like a spring breeze blowing from a bygone era, they continue to diffuse the scents of paradise into the gardens of our hearts.

As saints observe events from the window of the heart with a gaze of divine love, they have guided helpless and tired souls in their communities desperate for direction, as well as sultans who have changed the course of history. This was also because they had grasped the reasons behind the mysteries that elude reason, logic and surface knowledge; and hence, became the focal points of divine love.

Looking back on his own life, Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says he was ‘raw’ when having only mastered exoteric sciences. He says he subsequently became ‘cooked’ once he reached divine knowledge and began to discern the secret and finally ‘burnt’ after attaining divine love.

For people like Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) whose hearts are cast in divine love, their entire thoughts and feelings become aligned to the pleasure of the Lord, to the point where the Lord becomes their eyes that they see with and the hands with which they grasp.¹ As a result, they become spiritual centres of gravity, to which people thirsty for the truth, gravitate. Willingly or not, people find that their love flows towards them. As Allah the Almighty loves His righteous servants, He also makes people love them, as much as their capacities allow.

The Qur'an states:

“As for those who believe and do right actions, the All-Merciful will bestow His love on them.” (Maryam, 19: 96)

Our Prophet (pbuh) said:

“Once Allah loves a servant, He summons Jibril and says:

‘I love so-and-so of My servants. Now, you love him, too!’

Jibril then also loves that servant and calls out to the angels of the heavens:

‘Allah loves so-and-so. Now, all of you love him, too!’

The angels then love the servant. That love is then given to those on earth, and people start showing their affection towards him.” (Bukhari, Badu'l-Khalq, 6)

This is a love so grand that it is like a spiritual flame that engulfs every single layer of society from the bottom to the top, encircling people of all walks of life and temperament.

A clear indication of this love is the sheer number of visitors that flock to Rumi's (May Allah have mercy on him) tomb each day.

1. See, Bukhari, Riqaq, 38.

Renowned is the fact that besides the Muslim world, Rumi's (May Allah have mercy on him) *Mathnawi* is also one of the most sought after books of spirituality in the West and UNESCO marked the 800th anniversary of his birth by declaring 2007 the International Rumi Year.

This shows vividly how the genuine letter of guidance Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) wrote to humanity centuries ago, finds resonance and evokes excitement even today. This is because the *Mathnawi* helps solve man's spiritual problems by holding a mirror into his inner world and making him return to his essence. For people all but crushed under the tyranny of today's materialistic mentality, it delivers their hearts to peace and comfort, and acts as a means for their guidance. Rumi's words are never forgotten; they are always loved and fondly remembered.

And how could they not be loved? Rumi and saints like him turned their hearts into havens of compassion open to all kinds of people, from the broken-hearted to the destitute, from the sufferer to the needy, and from the righteous to the wrongdoer.

Humanity therefore longs for the loving embrace of saints like Shaykh Abdulqadir Al-Jilani, Bahauddin Naqshband, Yunus Emre, Shaykh Aziz Mahmud Hudayi and Rumi. It is because these wise men treated the common folks like birds with broken wings. Treating spiritual wounds inside their hearts gave them a joy beyond all the riches of the world.

Also, just as each prophet has a number of qualities unique to himself, saints also possess different characteristics, which are reflections from the Prophet of Mercy, Muhammed (pbuh). Saints know Allah (JJ) in their hearts in a deeper way than other people. They keep their hearts remote from all things mortal and constantly strive to get closer to their Lord. In the borderless terrain of divine knowledge, they are perpetually aware of their own weakness. But not every saint is on the same level, nor do they share the same duties.

Some saints are not obliged to guide others; so, they remain hushed in awe on the valleys of divine glory, and spend their days in the seclusion of silence, without a sound or a word. In the face of the divine currents of

power, saints of this kind are virtually mute. They pass their mortal days in the currents of a spiritual calm.

Regarding these types of souls, Ibn Abbas (RA) has said:

“Allah Almighty has servants so eloquent; yet, their love and respect for the Lord has reduced them to silence.”

Other saints of Allah (JJ) do prefer to speak, but only a little. As in the case of Bahauddin Naqshiband (May Allah have mercy on him), they are tasked with guiding those gifted with spiritual qualities, mostly through a kind of spiritual unspoken language which could be called the tongue of spiritual state (*lisan-i hal*).

Without doubt, Bahauddin Naqshiband's (May Allah have mercy on him) most precious works are the wise students who absorbed his state to the point that they were able to read the lines of wisdom etched in his heart. And through their spiritual gatherings (sohbets), they passed on this wisdom, from one person to another, for centuries on end. They continue to do so to this day.

Some saints, on the other hand, return to the public once they complete their spiritual journey (*sayr-i suluk*). These saints are perfect guides (*murshid-i kamil*) assigned with guiding people, through both their words and states. Saints of this kind are like fountains. Wisdoms and divine secrets begin to gush out from their tongues.

A saint of this class is Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him). Beyond his spiritual state, he was also tasked with guiding people through words. In a way, he is a sultan of spirituality who, for centuries, has used his inspiring pen and words to revive souls thirsty for the truth.

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) received a strong manifestation of our Lord's attribute of speech; and from this vantage, he may well be regarded a spokesperson for saints. With a God-given eloquence, he was able to beautifully articulate the knowledge, wisdom and secrets the Lord had given him, in the most memorable of words. Yet, Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) speaks only as much as he is permitted. Hence, it would be

a mistake to suppose that the secrets he unravels consist merely of what has come out of his pen. Who knows the divulged pearls of wisdom that lie in the bottom of the ocean of his spirituality, hidden away from plain sight.

In sufi training, much like a teacher who wishes not to say things that fly over a student's head, people of wisdom may pretend to be ignorant of the truths they well know.

Perhaps Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) reflects precisely this conduct when he says he articulated the *Mathnawi* in a way his student Husameddin Celebi could understand. Who knows what he would have spilled from his heart, if he had told the *Mathnawi*, not for Husameddin, but for Shams Tabrizi.

Clearly, saints graced with the unique manifestations of divine knowledge and love are like oceans, whose vastness and depth are impossible to gauge. Any person can dive into and take something from that ocean, but only as much as his skills allow.

An intellectual and a Rumi aficionado uses the following words to express how most people are out of their depth in properly understanding the master's profound spirituality:

"We have listened to the wails of Mevlana Rumi's ecstasy. We cannot possibly see the depths of the ocean into which he dived. We only see what has come up from those depths and washed ashore. We do not have Rumi's love. We only have the cries of a love that spilled from his tongue. And what we try to convey with our lisped-tongues, is precisely that. He alone delved into the sea of peace. All we are left with, is the sound of his storm of ecstasy. And we think that is Rumi!"²

Yet, true to the maxim 'It is an error to forfeit a piece just because one is unable to obtain the whole", we should still try to benefit from that spiritual ocean as much as we possibly can.

2. Nurettin Topçu, *Mevlânâ ve Tasavvuf*, p. 139.

Let us not forget that we, as a community, are known for placing such emphasis on the *Mathnawi* that it is our most read work after the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith of our Prophet (pbuh). In history, only three works have merited the accolade *sharif* (honoured). The first is *Bukhari-i Sharif*, comprising the hadith of our Beloved Prophet (pbuh). The second is the *Shifa-i Sharif* which describes the Prophet's (pbuh) appearance and traits. And the third is Rumi's (May Allah have mercy on him) *Mathnawi-i Sharif*. Throughout Ottoman history, qualified reciters read these three wonderful works in grand mosques.

When poet Yahya Kemal was asked:

“How did our ancestors reach the gates of Vienna?” he answered:

“By eating bulgur wheat and reading the *Mathnawi*.” In a way, this has been our badge of honour throughout history.

With that said, we must evaluate how worthy we are today of Rumi's (May Allah have mercy on him) legacy and how correctly we are able to understand him. We can do that only if we lend our hearts and souls to the remedies he prescribes for the diseases of negligence, egoism and selfishness.

Dear readers!

This humble book brings together our writings from the “*Wisdom from Saints*” series recently published in the *Altinoluk* magazine, where we tried to explain and interpret a number of Rumi's (May Allah have mercy on him) words and advices. Here, we aim to pay a contemplative visit to the house of wisdom that lies in Rumi's (May Allah have mercy on him) heart and expose our souls to his words of advice. It is all in the hope that it may polish our own hearts into shiny mirrors that reflect the conduct and mind-set of Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) and other saints.

We ask our Lord to allow us to hear the voices of Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) and other saints still resonating in the skies of our spirituality; and properly follow their sublime teachings, so that we may revitalise our hearts.

May our Lord engrave in our hearts the love of those He loves. Through His eternal grace, may He allow us to embody the noble character of His right acting servants and follow their direction. And ultimately, may He resurrect us by their sides.

Amin...!³

Osman Nûri Topbaş

December, 2017

Uskudar

3. I would like to thank M. Akif Günay for helping prepare this book and pray that his efforts become, for him, an endless source of rewards.



WORDS OF WISDOM FROM

Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him)



Words of Wisdom From Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him) - 1

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“As long as my soul abides in this skin, I am a slave to the Qur'an; and dust on the sacred path of Muhammed (pbuh), the Chosen One. Should anyone report from me the slightest word to the contrary, I am forever distant from both him and his word!..”

[Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) uses these words to express his unconditional bond to the word of Allah (JJ), and immense love and submission to the Prophet (pbuh).

Being dust on the Prophet's (pbuh) path, is to set one's heart on remaining lovingly attached to the Prophet (pbuh) for an entire lifetime, and to abide by his Sunnah in all affairs.

In other words, as is the case with all saints, Rumi's (May Allah have mercy on him) source of inspiration is the **Qur'an** and **Sunnah**. He is a spiritual sultan, whose bond with the Qur'an and Sunnah is furthermore embedded in love and ecstasy. Saints are fully aware that in the sight of the Lord, true sultans are those who are dusts on the Prophet's (pbuh) path.



Like many travellers on the path of the truth, Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) also distances himself from the ignorant who misconstrue his words and twist their meanings. By doing so, he also presents his own 'spiritual identity'.

Today, in fact, there is hardly a shortage of people intent on portraying Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) not as a believer in the Qur'an and Sunnah, but as a person with an allegiance to a host of other beliefs and philosophies.

Intentionally or not, these people unfortunately paint a false picture of Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) and the Mawlawi Sufi Order; one that is uprooted from the wholesome soil of its spiritual tradition and dragged deep into the domain of the pretensions of the ego.

They attempt to depict Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) and the Sufi path in general, not as the way of practising the Qur'an and Sunnah with an eager heart in pursuit of closeness to Allah, but in the way they want to see it. They simply look to hijack the legacies of Sufi greats, so they can use them as pillars for their own worldviews.

They argue, for example, that the reed flute depicted in the *Mathnawi* which represents the authentically perfect human being (*al-insan al-kamil*), is just an orchestral instrument. Similarly, the rite of whirling (*sama*), which occupies an important place in the profound system of the Mawlawi order, is reduced to a mere folk dance.

Still, the fact remains that Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) is a guide to the truth who points humanity to the direction laid out by the Holy Qur'an. Until the final hour, he essentially calls on all human beings to train their hearts to realise their belief and strive to seize their share from the depths of the Qur'an and the prophetic wisdom of the Prophet (pbuh).]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

"The dog of the Sleepers of the Cave cleansed itself of dirt and took the seat of honour on the table of kings."

“It was because that dog chose to loyally guard the Sleepers. And at the mouth of the cave, without a bowl or pot in front of it, it lapped up the water of divine mercy reserved for the wise.”

[People of wisdom carry the love and ecstasy in their hearts over to their circles and the light in their hearts overflows onto those around them. Thus, people who befriend and accompany the righteous, in time, become righteous themselves.

A striking example in this regard is the story of the companions of the cave narrated in the Qur'an. Despite being just a dog, in return for watching over a group of righteous people, Qitmir received a ray of their beautiful states and simply for accompanying the righteous, it is narrated that Qitmir will also enter paradise.⁴

If a dog can reach that level by sticking with Allah's (JJ) righteous servants, one cannot even imagine how much a true believer can progress by loving and accompanying the righteous.

The Almighty, in fact, says:

“You who believe! Fear Allah and be with the truthful!” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 119)

In contrast, the Almighty also warns us against the negative effects of hanging around wrongdoers:

“When you see people engrossed in mockery of Our Signs, turn from them until they start to talk of other things. And if Shaytan should ever cause you to forget, then once you remember, do not stay sitting with the wrongdoers.” (Al-Anam, 6: 68)

“It has been sent down to you in the Book that when you hear Allah's Signs being rejected and mocked at by people, you must not sit with them till they start talking of other things. If you do you are just the same as them. Allah will gather all the hypocrites and disbelievers into hell.” (Al-Nisa, 4: 140)

4. See, I. Hakkı Bursevî, *Rühu'l-Beyân*, V, 226.

Keeping company with righteous people lifts up the heart, whereas accompanying wrongdoers, disbelievers and hypocrites weighs it down.

Hence, the Prophet (pbuh) says:

“A person is on the religion of his intimate friend. Therefore, watch out for who your friends are!” (Tirmizi, Zuhd, 45)

A Muslim, therefore, needs to take a good look at his friends and decide whose side he is really on, from the perspective of his belief.

If all our thoughts and actions are in harmony with the guidance of our Prophet (pbuh) and his inheritors, Allah (JJ) may allow us to realise the secret of the hadith *“A person is with who he loves”*⁵ and unite us with them in the Next World...]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Even if you are as hard as a rock and as cold as marble, a man with a heart will turn you into a pearl.”

[Just as alchemy aims to turn base metal into gold, prophets and their heirs who are the righteous saints and scholars, possess knowledge of the alchemy of the heart. Many raw souls, who lovingly entered their company, became model human beings through the grace of their spiritual training and guidance.

The most glaring example of this, is the time of Prophet Muhammed (pbuh). The society of the aptly labelled ‘age of ignorance’, who were semi-savage and almost completely detached from reality, turned into exemplary figures, once they were exposed to the Prophet’s (pbuh) sublime training.

In the hands of an able gardener, a thorny shrub becomes a lush garden that can sooth hearts and souls. And in like manner, the coming of the Prophet (pbuh) converted a desert swamped with pools of blood into a tranquil oasis. His beaming smile turned many a barren heart green and adorned it with flowers of mercy. Hearts dyed pitch black in the darkness of disbelief were converted into shiny diamonds. It was an age that raised

5. Bukhari, Adab, 96.

consummate individuals who, until the final hour, will continue to shine like stars above the skies of virtue and show the way to those who have gone adrift.

After receiving a reflection of the Prophet's (pbuh) light, a society that had previously been virtually plunged into the bottom of the Indian Ocean through ignorance and tyranny, suddenly climbed the Mount Everest in mercy, compassion and selflessness.

The savage and ruthless human being, who ripped little girls away from their mother's embrace and buried them alive, suddenly disappeared and made way for a teary-eyed and sensitive spirit with a heart full of mercy.

The cold-hearted Umar of pre-Islam became the tender-hearted Umar (RA) we have come to admire greatly. He reached a lofty level of responsibility and selflessness that forced him to proclaim, *"If a wolf was to snatch a lamb from the banks of the Euphrates, I would fear that Allah will call me to account for it."*⁶

The Abyssinian Wahshi of pre-Islam, a ruthless man who almost exulted in blood, became a soft-hearted, deeply reflective man, after submitting to the guidance and teachings of the Prophet (pbuh).

Prior to being guided, many others like them were spiritually dead, clutched by the claws of vice. But they, too, became forever young by sipping the water of guidance from that same fountain of immortality. Their hearts became a shelter, where weary souls found comfort and solace; and a refuge of compassion for widows, orphans and the outcast.

This magnificent revolution that transformed hearts inspired one of the most important scholars of Islamic law, Qarafi, to say:

*"Even if the Prophet (pbuh) had shown no miracles, the companions he raised would have sufficed to prove the truth of his call."*⁷

In fact, the Almighty also presents the noble companions as a '**model generation**'. The Qur'an states:

6. See, Ibn Abi Shaybah, *Musannaf*, VIII, 153.
7. Qarafi, *Al-Furuq*, Daru's-Salam, 2001, IV, 305.

“The forerunners – the first of the Muhajirun and the Ansar - and those who have followed them in doing good: Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with him...” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 100)

We are members of **the Prophet’s** (pbuh) community, who have come some 1400 years after him. We don’t have the opportunity to be a ‘companion’, yet the opportunity to ‘**follow the Muhajirun and Ansar in doing good**’, as is mentioned in the above verse, is open for all members of the Prophet’s (pbuh) community until the day of judgment.

If we follow the great Muhajirun, and migrate from falsehood to the truth, from evil to good, from wrong action to right action, from selfishness to selflessness and from greed to sacrifice...

...and, like the Ansar, mobilise all our power to serve Allah’s (JJ) religion and generously share our every means with our brothers in Islam...

...that is when, we can be among the righteous believers who follow and extend the trail blazed by the Prophet’s (pbuh) noble companions.

Let us not forget that if the companions were students trained personally by the Prophet (pbuh), we are also the Prophet’s (pbuh) final batch of students, subject to the same Qur’anic verses and the sayings and actions of the Prophet (pbuh).

Irrespective of how much time may have passed since, gaining a higher rank by Allah (JJ) and getting closer to the Prophet in our character (pbuh) ultimately and solely depends on our fear of Allah or ‘**taqwa**’.

The Prophet (pbuh), in fact, underlines this, when he says:

“No matter who or where they are, those closest to me are the righteous who have taqwa of Allah.” (Ahmed, V, 235; Haythami, IX, 22)

And in another hadith, the Prophet (pbuh) tells us precisely how we can gain proximity to him:

“Without a doubt, my true companions are those who have taqwa.” (Abu Dawud, Fitan, 1/4242)

Just as the companions absorbed and practiced these divine teachings simply for the honour of gaining closeness to Allah (JJ) and His Messenger (pbuh), as the addressees of the same teachings today, we are also obliged to show the same effort.

We must compare the quality of our own efforts to the 'civilisation of virtues' the companions had built and become more determined on the path of our religion. Every civilisation raises its own type of human being and we represent a civilisation of virtues, whose foundations were laid at the time of the Prophet (pbuh), and which has survived for more than fourteen centuries. We need to embody it and ensure that it is passed on to future generations in all its glory.

Our Prophet (pbuh) says:

"My community is like the rain. No one can tell which is best: the first phase or the last." (Tirmizi, Adab, 81)

So, let us pause and think:

- ✓ How much effort do we really show to become a drop in this rain of mercy?
- ✓ How worthy are we of the Blessed Prophet (pbuh) who was sent as a mercy to the worlds?
- ✓ How much of our outlook is compatible with being members of an 'Umma (community) of mercy'?
- ✓ Are we really on track to become the 'brothers' to grace the earth towards the end of times, who our Prophet (pbuh) says he misses?
- ✓ To what extent are we able to follow the footsteps of the Prophet (pbuh) and his companions in our journeys of life? Do our worldly ambitions and desires drag us away from their trail into dead-end streets?
- ✓ Instead of taking the Prophet (pbuh) and his companions as a measure, do we copy others of our modern society and hide behind empty consolations?

✓ How did the companions raise their children? What kind of a generation were they able to rear? How much attention do we spare to the spiritual education of our children? More pressingly, how much control do we really have on our children? Are we really protecting them from the detrimental effects of television, the internet, media and bad company?

Let us never forget that insofar as the essence of the divine trial is concerned, there is no difference between the ignorant society to whom the Prophet (pbuh) was sent and the society of ignorance today. If, back then, the strong crushed the weak, the powerful were always considered right and many evil acts were committed openly, today's world has sadly become a scene for crimes of equal severity.

Back then, due to financial concerns or fear that they may grow up to tarnish their family's reputation, innocent girls were snatched from their mothers and buried alive. Today's modern society of ignorance does even worse. It pays the butchers of abortion clinics to cut babies into pieces whilst still in their mothers' wombs, before they ever get to see the light of day.

Allah warns in His book of the impending judgment in the grand divine court:

“When the baby girl buried alive is asked, for what crime she was killed?” (Al-Takfir, 81: 8-9)

Judging by this, a tough trial and stern punishment also awaits today's abortion baby butchers.

As for the desperate souls who, through purely selfish concerns, surrender their babies to these butchers in clinics, they should be asked:

What right do you have to take the life of a soul given by Allah (J)? Do you have any way of knowing the unseen? Can you tell what the future will bring? How do you know that the baby you murder will not grow up to become your refuge, fortress and tower of strength? Perhaps he or she will protect you when you fall on hard times, and pick you up when you are down.

Regardless of the era, a person who does not live their life according to Islam (submission to the commands of Allah) will remain, in the words of

the Qur'an, a 'tyrant' and 'ignorant'.⁸ Every historical phase distant from Allah (JJ) and His Messenger (pbuh) is effectively an age of ignorance. The savagery of each age unreformed by divine and prophetic teachings, is equal to another.

This is only because a change in time, place, living conditions or the general décor does not bring about a change in human nature. What is the difference between today's modern society of ignorance, hell-bent on living fast engrossed in worldly indulgence and the society of ignorance of fourteen centuries ago, other than their culture and fashion sense?

In light of these observations, we can say:

Just as our Prophet (pbuh) served to reform an unruly society in the past and turn its members into exemplary human beings, only his breath of mercy can once again breathe a new life of peace and salvation into our modern society.

And just as the human race needed him back then it will continue to need him, until the Day of Judgment. As He was the final Messenger sent to all mankind, his revitalising standards were not exclusively a cure for his era, but for all ages and generations until the end of time.

On the famous Night of the Miraj (heavenly ascension), when the past, present and future merged, the Prophet (pbuh) was shown both the Garden and the Fire. He saw all the trials and tribulations his community will face until the end of time and relayed many of these, scene by scene, in the collection of hadith known as '*fitan*'(tribulations).

Despite this being the case, a deviant group today known as 'historians' attempt to imprison the teachings of the Prophet (pbuh) to the narrow confines of the seventh century CE. They claim that many of the Qur'an's legal rulings are out of date and incompatible with today's conditions. It is with this logic, for instance, that they seek to overturn the Qur'an's laws of inheritance and seek to abolish many of the divine rulings.

8. See, Al-Ahzab, 72.

Another deviant group imagines the Prophet (pbuh) in some kind of retirement, claiming that ‘...if the Prophet (pbuh) was to come to us today, we would kiss his hands and feet; yet, the time is ours and we will stick to our own methods!’

Islam’s relevance will no doubt remain paramount until the Day of Judgment; and it is naturally exulted high above all these deliriums. In the sight of Allah (JJ), the only true and perfect religion is Islam.

As for these deviants, they seek to subvert the hearts and beliefs of Muslims at a time when they are already physically scattered. As Muslims, we need utmost caution and prudence guarding ourselves and children from these kind of subversions.

In fact, addressing all Muslims to come until the end of time, our Prophet (pbuh) issued the following warning to one of his most beloved companions Abdullah ibn Umar (RA):

“Son of Umar! Seize hold of your religion; seize hold of your religion! For it is your flesh and blood! Beware of who you learn your religion from! Learn its teachings and rulings from the upright, not from the deviant!” (Hatib Al-Baghdadi, *al-Kifaya fi Ilmi'r-Riwayah*, p. 121)]

May Allah (JJ) bind our feet on the upright path. May He give us the prudence to recognise truth and follow it; and discern falsehood and avoid it. May our Lord never separate us from the path of those whom He loves. And may He raise us up with them in the Next World.

Amin!...





WORDS OF WISDOM FROM

Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him)



2

Words of Wisdom From Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him) - 2

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Everyone knew that Ahmed (pbuh) was at the peak of reason and wisdom. But not every mind could comprehend the divine knowledge revealed to him.”

“Manifestations true to the spirit of revelation and knowledge that come directly from the Lord (ilm al-ladunn), are lofty and supreme. Reason cannot grasp them; for those lofty truths are in the far corners of the spiritual realm, out of reach of reason and logic.”

“At times, reason even perceives conduct that is true to the spirit of religion, as lunacy. At times, it may be in awe of it and be astonished. That is because to comprehend these lofty truths, reason also needs to soar to that level; better still, it must form a harmony with the heart.”

“Even Moses’ mind struggled with the sublime truths (ilm al-ladunn) that appeared in Khidr; even though he was a prophet to whom the Lord spoke. You who thinks he is nifty and clever, tell me: what benefit does reason have to a mouse?”



“Just remember that if an atom was to try to weigh a mountain, it will only crush under its weight.”

“Sacrifice your reason in the presence of the Chosen One, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and proclaim: Allah is enough for me!”

[Correct belief is to affirm Allah's (JJ) existence, unity and the truth of everything He has revealed in the heart and on the tongue, not a process of grasping the truth through reason; it is a pre-admission of the heart.

A true Muslim possesses a heart that fully affirms, without any room for doubt, the truths of the unseen (*ghayb*), which the eyes cannot see and reason is helpless to discern.

Reason, or basic soundness of mind, is the first condition of being accountable to the commands of religion. Throughout the Qur'an, we find commands to use the intellect. From this perspective, reason is an immensely precious divine blessing. However, like many blessings, reason is a double-edged blade as it can be used for good or bad.

Satan, in fact, was destined to be eternally cursed as a result of his selfish reasoning. To guide a person to the good, reason must therefore be trained under revelation.

Reason does not hold an infinite power in reaching the truth. Similar to how the eyes can only see things within a certain range and ears can only hear sounds within a certain sonic frequency, reason also has its limit. It is impossible for the limited to wholly grasp the limitless. A cup cannot possibly hold the entire ocean.

Thus, a true Muslim is a person who peacefully submits his heart to Allah (JJ) and His Messenger (pbuh), especially in regards to the unseen realm we call the *ghayb*, which surpasses reason's limits of comprehension. A prime example is the incident below:

Prior to informing Quraysh of the events of Isra and Miraj, **our Prophet** (pbuh) said:

“But, Jibril, no one will believe me!”

Jibril (AS) replied:

“Abu Bakr will. He is the *siddiq* (the truthful).” (Ibn Saad, I, 215)

And indeed, when the pagans heard about the miracle of the Miraj which their scope reason could not possibly fathom, they supposed they now had a card up their sleeves by which they could turn Muslims away from their religion. So, they ran to Abu Bakr (RA) and scornfully remarked:

“Your friend claims he went to Masjid Al-Aqsa in a single night, then travelled to the heavens and returned to Mecca before the break of dawn. So, what do you say this time?”

Unperturbed, Abu Bakr (RA) calmly replied:

“Whatever he says is true; for there is no way he could lie! I believe everything he says in advance!”

The astounded pagans retorted:

“So, you are saying that he speaks the truth when he says he went to Masjid Al-Aqsa and returned in a single night?”

“Yes”, replied Abu Bakr (RA). “What is so surprising about that? He tells me he receives revelation from the Lord of the universe at any given moment of night or day, and I believe him about that. (Can the One who delivers news to him directly from His presence beyond time and space not take him on a journey inside time and space if He wills?)”

Abu Bakr (RA) later went to see the Prophet (pbuh) who happened to be at the Kaba. He listened to the event directly from him and responded:

“You have spoken the truth (*sadaqta*), O Messenger of Allah!”

The Prophet (pbuh) delightedly said:

“*You, Abu Bakr, are the truthful one As-siddiq!...*” (Ibn Hisham, II, 5)

Abu Bakr’s (RA) unshakable heart and unfaltering confirmation of the Prophet (pbuh) was testimony to the weight and perfection of his belief. About him, Ali (RA) has said:

“You were like a majestic mountain, which storms could not move and fierce earthquakes could not shift!”

In the tumult of this final phase of history, we are also confronted, time and again, by trials of loyalty. We now frequently come across so-called ‘scholars’ without sufficient command of religious and spiritual sciences, who have nonetheless adopted the redundant ideas of orientalists, whose aim is to muddy the minds of Muslims and destroy them from the inside.

Some of them are so miserable that after learning a mere handful of philosophical ideas or rules of logic, they have a stab at belittling the Qur'an and Sunnah. Others are just so spellbound by wealth and fame that they fall victim to their egos and warp the truths of religion according to their worldly benefit. There are hapless others, who try to make Islam pay for their own lack of understanding and weakness of heart.

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) called out to these ignorant souls centuries ago:

“Do not blame the rose if your nose cannot smell!”

In a way, the great saint is saying:

“If you cannot bring yourself to enter the infinitely rich wonders of the Qur'an's wisdom, and the Sunnah, which is to apply this wisdom in one's life, then at least do not resort to the infamy of blaming them. Search for the fault in your own heart!”

The fact is that it is easy to correct a person aware of his ignorance. But it is difficult to correct stubborn fools, who suppose they are intelligent and imagine that they always know best. Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Prophets endure the most troubles, for setting raw people straight is a great trouble in its own right.”

In one hadith, where the Prophet (pbuh) speaks of some of the tribulations that will take place as the hour draws near, he states:

9. Abu Nuaym, *Marifatu's-Sahaba*, I, 264.

“There will come a time when the hypocrite and disbeliever will quarrel with believers using words similar to what Muslims use about Allah!” (Hakim, Mustadrak, IV, 504/8412)¹⁰

Today, the Prophet’s (pbuh) words are in fact confirmed by a wave of historicist and reformist theologians who strive revamp Islam by interpreting the Qur'an and Sunnah with a deficient reasoning that is driven by their personal interests; and who brazenly counsel righteous Muslims despite being far removed from *taqwa* and full of errors in their basic understanding of Allah (JJ). They are joined by so-called Muslims eager to ostracise and excommunicate believers ‘in the name of Islam’, and ignorant self-styled Sufis who really do nothing but undermine the path of religion.

Instead of giving an ear to such charlatans, a Muslim must simply become ever more loyally and gratefully devoted to the Prophet (pbuh) for having informed us about these events fourteen centuries ago.

The fact is that many people whose ill hearts prevent them from submitting to Allah (JJ) and His Messenger (pbuh), waver in the swamp of doubt when faced with certain divine truths that their minds and egos just cannot accept. And once this doubt unites with Satanic whisperings, it pushes their flawed reasoning to question Islam’s essential sources.

Yet, Islam is not something we can pick and choose from according to whatever our reason finds appealing. Islam is a whole. No one can be a believer unless he accepts Islam and affirms it in its entirety. Belief cannot be split into parts it is only valid as a whole. Thus, insofar as the end result is concerned, there is no difference between a person who rejects the Qur'an entirely and one who rejects a single one of the Qur'an's rulings. Both have lost their *iman* (belief/trust).

Hence, a Muslim is a person who accepts Islam in its entirety; and gratefully submits to the commands of Allah (JJ) and His Messenger (pbuh) without reservation.

The best way to respond to these thieves who look to steal belief out of people's minds and make Islam fall out of their favour in their minds by dis-

10. Compare with Bukhari, Ilim, 24.

paraging major figures, schools of Islamic jurisprudence and especially the Sunnah, is to show the *sidq* (truthfulness/loyalty) that became legendary in Abu Bakr (RA); to display an unshakable devotion and submission to Allah (JJ) and His Messenger (pbuh). This is a loyalty that involves laying claim to and tightly embracing the Qur'an, Sunnah, the institutions of Islamic civilisation and the monumental figures raised by these institutions.

Such attacks on the values of Islam that will continue until the end of time, are, 'tests of belief'. We must repel these attacks by wearing the armour of submission to the Almighty Lord and practicing our beliefs with vigour and love. And in doing so, we come out of each test stronger.

Muslims confronted by these false ideas also need to be careful. A skilled diver can fearlessly swim in the deep sea and gaze at the wonderful scenery it has to offer. There is no harm for a good Muslim to use one foot to trek the diverse worldviews of the 72 sects, as long as he has the other foot, like a compass, standing firm in Islam. The danger lies in plunging into the deep end without knowing how to swim.

Simpler put, upon encountering the dialectical games and the elaborate yet false ideas of orientalists, it is highly dangerous for a person who hasn't properly absorbed the basic knowledge of Islam, to presume they may be correct, or even feel admiration towards them.

Nowadays, when the spokespeople of orientalists from within the Muslim world put forth their own views on Islam, they wrap one lie inside a bundle of ten facts, just to ensure their false ideas are accepted. And through this tactic, they subvert the beliefs of those with little knowledge.

So, if a Muslim falls into doubt due to his own lack of knowledge and wisdom, he should immediately consult a righteous scholar and find out the truth of the matter before the virus of doubt spreads in his heart. He should also constantly reinforce his spirituality by maintaining a connection with righteous Muslims.

We should never forget that the deliriums of minds crippled by deceptive philosophies will not save or be of any use to a person at their final breath and in the grave; neither will they be of any value on the day of judg-

ment, where all souls are gathered on the plain of resurrection and actions are weighed on the scale and each person is made to pass the *Sirat* bridge. A deep love, a heartfelt devotion and sincere obedience to Allah (JJ) and His Messenger (pbuh) are the only spiritual investments for eternal happiness.

The bottom line is that a fruit tree is always stoned. A thief steals not from a pawnshop but from a jeweller. So, in today's world where false and corrupted religions have nothing more to offer humanity, one should not be startled by the increased attacks on Islam, the one true religion in the sight of Allah (JJ).

Instead of weakening our bond with Islam, these attacks should make us appreciate our great religion all the more, and seize it with an even bigger love and submission.

In fact, the exemplary generation of the companions were tied to Allah (JJ) and His Messenger (pbuh) with such love that at the instant they learned a divine command, they would exclaim “سَمِعْنَا وَ أَطَعْنَا” : **We hear and obey**¹¹; and with profound devotion, immediately apply it in their lives, without the least concern for what any critics might say or how the pagans and hypocrites would react. Most of the time, they would not even question its underlying wisdom.

It was because they had reached such purity of heart by melting all their spiritual spasms and selfish questions in the pot of submission to Allah (JJ) and His Messenger (pbuh). They personally knew and tremendously loved and admired the Prophet (pbuh). Hence, they preferred a place in his heart to all the fame and fortune in the world; and left no stone unturned to win his love and affection. And in a rapture of faith, they would ecstatically proclaim, “*May my life, wealth and everything I have be sacrificed in Your way, Messenger of Allah; you just ask!*”

Abdullah ibn Umar (RA) was a consummate devotee of **the Prophet** (pbuh). From the early years of his childhood, he dedicated his life to following the Prophet (pbuh) in every step of the way and imitating everything he did, regardless of whether he knew their underlying wisdoms.

11. Al-Baqarah, 285.

For instance, he would frequently go to drink from a certain well only because he had seen the Prophet (pbuh) do so. Likewise, he would rest under a certain tree because the Prophet (pbuh) had done the same; and again, lean against a rock on which the Prophet (pbuh) had also leaned. In explaining his eagerness to emulate the Prophet (pbuh), the great companion once said:

*“Allah sent the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) to us at a time when we knew nothing and for that reason, whatever we saw him do, we would do the same.”*¹²

On top of his verbal commands, the companions also paid great attention to the Prophet’s (pbuh) gestures. Seeing him do something even once, was enough. He would not need to additionally tell them to do it. The companions would imitate that deed for the rest of their lives.

Anas (RA) has said:

“I once saw the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) offer voluntary morning prayer (duha). After that day, I never missed that prayer, not even once.”

Hasan Basri, who reported the above words, added:

“After hearing this from Anas (RA), I never skipped that prayer either.”
(See, Tabarani, Awsat, II, 68/1276)

Ali (RA), who is among the most brilliant examples of loving devotion to the Prophet (pbuh), offers similar words of wisdom:

“We saw the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) stand, and we stood with him. We saw him sit and so did we.” (Ahmed, I, 83)

It was because those noble companions very well knew that the Prophet (pbuh) always did what Allah (JJ) wanted him to do. The Prophet’s (pbuh) teacher and trainer was none other than Allah (JJ) himself. He never spoke out of personal desire but only communicated what he received from the Lord, as the Qur'an confirms on many occasions:

“Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah...” (Al-Nisa, 4: 80)

12. Ibn Majah, Iqamah, 73; Ahmed, II, 65, 94; IV, 78.

“Say: If you love Allah then follow me and Allah will love you and forgive your wrong actions...” (Al-i Imran, 3: 31)

“Whatever the Messenger gives you you should accept and whatever He forbids you, you should forgo.” (Al-Hashr, 59: 7)

Hence, the companions would immediately put the Prophet’s (pbuh) commands into action, without feeling the need to justify them within the boundaries of their intellects, and irrespective of whether they knew their underlying reason. Besides, they knew that the Prophet (pbuh) received his commands from the Allah (JJ), the Creator of every intellect. Therefore, the most intelligent way for man, whose mind is riddled with many fantasies and illusions, was to follow the most intelligent of all men, Allah’s Messenger (pbuh).

Especially in this day and age, we must therefore be extremely alert against those who, despite appearing to be speaking on behalf of the truth, proclaim that “the Qur'an alone is enough!” and by doing so, look to discredit the Prophet’s (pbuh) Sunnah, which is really nothing other than the Qur'an in action.

Ayyub Al-Sahtiyani, who was a leading scholar of hadith and Islamic law from the generation that succeeded the companions (*tabiun*), states:

*“When the Sunnah is mentioned and you hear someone say, ‘Do not bother us with that; inform us of the Qur'an’, know that that person has not only led himself astray but is also misleading others.”*¹³

In explaining this, the notable scholar of hadith and Islamic law from the next generation, Imam Awzai adds:

“That is because the Sunnah is a legislator for the Qur'an.”

One can never practice the Qur'an without knowing the Sunnah. For instance, the Qur'an forbids the consumption of carcass. Yet, we learn from the Sunnah that it is permissible to eat fish that have died after being caught. The Qur'an orders us to offer the Friday prayer. But as to how and what time we are to pray, we, again, learn that from the Sunnah.

13. Hakim, *Marifatu Ulumi'l-Hadith*, p. 65; Hatib Al-Baghdadi, *Al-Kifaya fi Ilmi'r-Riwayah*, p. 16.

Imran ibn Husayn (RA) was the judge of Basra at the time of Caliph Uthman (RA), when a man approached him and said:

“You narrate to us a number of hadith; yet we cannot find their source in the Qur'an.”

Imran (RA) replied:

“You know how one in forty dirhams and so many sheep and camels from a herd, are given in alms, right? Do you find this mentioned anywhere in the Qur'an?”

“No”, responded the man.

“Well, then who taught you these? We did. And we learned them from Allah's Messenger”, explained Imran (RA), before continuing to list other examples.¹⁴

The Qur'an declares:

“The Faithful Ruh (Jibril) brought it down to your heart so you would be one of the Warners in a clear Arabic tongue.” (Al-Shuara, 26: 193-195)

The Qur'an was embodied during the 23 years of the Prophet's (pbuh) life as Allah's Messenger. It is, therefore, impossible to understand the Qur'an, let alone properly practice it, without taking a share of the Prophet's (pbuh) exemplary morals and following in his perfect Sunnah.

Our Noble Prophet (pbuh) has said:

“Do any one of you, reclining comfortably in your chair, suppose that Allah has not banned anything apart from what is detailed in the Qur'an? Be well aware that, by Allah, I have advised, commanded and banned many things. These are as many as those in the Qur'an, if not more...” (Abu Dawud, Kharaj, 31-33/3050)

“Know that I have been given the Qur'an, and something else with it. But the time is near when a man will recline on his couch on a full stomach and

14. Abu Dawud, Zakat, 2/1561; Ibn Abi Asim, *Al-Sunnah*, II, 386; Tabarani, *Al-Mujamu'l-Kabir*, XVIII, 219.

say, 'Just seize the Qur'an! It is enough for you to accept what it bans and what it commands...'" (Abu Dawud, Sunnah, 5/4604; Ahmed, IV, 131)

We have now reached the time foretold by the Prophet (pbuh), when the Sunnah is being abandoned. To protect ourselves and our children from the tribulations of our times, we must strive to learn and practice our religion properly.

We should always remember that our Prophet's (pbuh) Sunnah is the only guide by which we can correctly practice the guidance contained in the Qur'an. Hence, we should always bear in mind that the objections against the Sunnah are in reality objections against the Qur'an itself, and consequently against Islam and against Allah the Almighty and Majestic (JJ).

In fact, one of the greatest scholars of the *tabiun* generation, Abdullah ibn Daylami says:

"As far as I have been taught, the demise of Islam will begin with the abandoning of the Sunnah. Once people begin to discard the Sunnah, the religion will be lost piece by piece, just as a rope comes undone thread by thread until it ultimately snaps." (Darimi, Muqaddimah, 16/98)

Through His eternal grace and benevolence, may Allah the Almighty allow us a place among His righteous servants who genuinely seize hold of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and live in line with His pleasure.

Amin!...





WORDS OF WISDOM FROM

Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him)



3

Words of Wisdom From Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him) - 3

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Have you ever sowed wheat and reaped barley?”

[In the afterlife, we will all face the consequences of our actions and we will harvest what we sow.

It is certain that the bright morning of eternity will not dawn on a dark worldly night of revelry, where the ego has wallowed its own desires and cruelty, away from the light of belief and right action from inspired heart. A colourfully flamboyant life is a symptom of a pale end, and the carefree excessive laughter is an omen of a coming torment.

The eternal sun of joy rises only from the hearts of those who lead an upright life under the guiding light of divine revelation; and who are therefore blessed to be able to make that passage into the Next World with a peaceful conscience and with a dignified clean heart.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“If you are searching for something in the wrong place, you are not searching for it at all.”



[The world is like a marketplace where the afterlife is bought. This marketplace, however, is also a place of trial. It is adorned with countless dazzling to make man forget the thing you came there to buy. We must never forget that the true life is in the afterlife; and while strolling in this marketplace of earth, we must always keep in mind what we should be pursuing.

In this marketplace of earth, each item is to be found at a different section. A person looking for happiness must avoid walking through the arcade of misery and gazing at the shopwindows of the ego and the devil.

True to the verse, **“Allah has bought from the believers their selves and their wealth in return for the Garden.”** (Al-Tawbah, 9: 111), our greatest duty in this marketplace is to purchase Allah’s (JJ) pleasure and the only way of doing that is to enter the luminous market place of the Qur'an and the Prophet’s (pbuh) Sunnah. We can unite with the divine light that will enlighten the way for us to eternal salvation, only if we turn towards this direction.

In contrast, turning back on the divine light and instead clutching at personal delusions, Satanic illusions, flawed philosophies and corrupted religions, is nothing but suicide.

An ignorant person blinded to the fact that the real life is the one that awaits in the Next World, dives feet first into the shallow sensory pleasures of the world, despite being nothing on earth but a guest. He thinks fleeting opportunities such as wealth will protect him, imagining he will live forever. A wise man calls out to such deluded people with the words:

“Do not wish eternity from the world. How can the world give you eternity, when it does not have it itself?”]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Tell me, nightingale! Until when will you cry over this dark winter? Is it proper, nightingale, to constantly bemoan about your torment? If your heart is really attached to your beloved, then open your eyes and give thanks; and speak of loyalty! Do not worry about the thorn; talk about the rose! Do not care for the rose’s root and stem; look at its essence! Why are

you so preoccupied with this passing world? Is it because you do not want to fly?"

[Through the figure of a nightingale crying over its love for the rose, **Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him)** teaches people in love with Allah (JJ) the correct manner of devotion. It follows that a believer will face a number of trials that will test the sincerity of his love for his Master, just as gold is struck against a touchstone to see whether it is real or fake.

A Muslim must be aware that the obstacles he faces on the path of good action that deliver him to Allah's (JJ) pleasure, are part of the trials that test his love.

He must remember that the divine declaration "**Do people imagine that they will be left to say 'We believe,' and not be tested?**" (Al-Ankabut, 29: 2) is applicable at all times, including in his personal affairs. So, instead of complaining about the test and wishing for a life without trials, he must take these hardships in his stride and strive to prove his loyalty and submission to His Lord in them.

It is for this reason that Sufism is "the art of forgetting how to complain." It is the path towards obtaining Allah's (JJ) pleasure by being satisfied with all His judgments, whether bitter or sweet.

A true Muslim is one who believes that both good and bad come from Allah (JJ). He knows that He tests his servants through both hardship and ease.

Servants conscious of this truth and truly in love with the Lord perceive the pain that comes from their Beloved as pleasure, and troubles as mercy. They understand that the hardships they face are a means to cleanse their hearts, wipe wrong actions, and lift their spiritual rank. They are aware that these troubles are like the bitter medicine prescribed by an expert doctor or the sharp blade of a surgeon's knife that cuts away the fatal bacteria in their bodies, curing them from lethal diseases.

Thus, they always respond to the bittersweet surprises life has to offer with a sense of gratitude and satisfaction towards their Lord. Distressing events that make raw people moan, cry and even rebel, do not turn their

faces sour. It is because their hearts are focused not on the thorns on the road, but on the destination ahead. For the sake of the rose, they tolerate the thorns that prick their skin and see the hidden gift in it and spot the keys to divine love delivered in a box full of troubles.

Also, if being tested with troubles and hardships was in fact something negative in the sight of Allah (JJ), then Allah (JJ) would never have made His beloved servants go through any hardships whatsoever. The truth is that Allah (JJ) has reserved His greatest hardships to His most beloved servants. Still, those servants were always at greater peace than others.

The Prophet (pbuh) was tested in crucible of the most severe hardships; and when he was stoned at Taif, he raised his arms and prayed:

“O merciful of the merciful! If You are not angry with me, I do not care about the troubles and suffering I endure!... My Lord! I wish for Your forgiveness until You are pleased with me...” (Ibn Hisham, II, 29-30, Haythami, VI, 35)

For loving hearts that have unravelled this secret, troubles that come from Allah (JJ) are cornerstones that separate true lovers from pretenders.

A poet gives splendid voice to this, when he says:

*A bother from the lover is not rough but tender
He who says otherwise is just a pretender*

Yet, undoubtedly, this kind of spiritual maturity is not for everyone. It is only for perfect souls that have advanced through the stages of polishing the heart.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“If a bird tries to fly before its wings have developed, it will only end up as dinner for the cats.”

[Spiritual states and stations require a certain competence. A person diving into it without possessing the required competence, only flings himself to destruction. This is similar to a bird trying to fly out of its nest before learning how to properly flap its wings, or a person who dives into the deep end before learning how to swim.

In all matters, whether it be material or spiritual, man must know his limits. It is for this reason that the wise have said, “*No wisdom is greater than knowing your flaws!*”

In this regard, claiming the perfection of great figures, who possess unique spiritual states, without being aware of one’s own flaws and limits, is an error carrying traces of hypocrisy. To stake a claim to their spiritual levels, artificially and disingenuously mimicking the words of saints that spill out from their hearts, ultimately stunts the growth of a person’s spirituality.

If a layman, for example, says, “*Your wrath is beautiful and so is Your grace. It is the same whether we are saved or destroyed*”, which are words that belong only to the degree of real contentment with Allah (*rida*), he would be challenging the Almighty. And if the Almighty was to then test him accordingly, he would be immediately exposed.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“There is such a thing as entering the fire in the path of Allah. But before you jump into it, see if you carry any qualities of Abraham! For the fire recognises not you, but the Abrahams, and spares only them.

“Let us suppose that, like Abraham, you smashed an idol. But like Abraham, can you also feed the idol that is your flesh, to the fire?”

“It is well within your power to hold the staff of Moses. But do you have the force of Moses to turn that staff into a dragon and command it?”

“Let us say you breathe the same breath of Jesus, who raised the dead. But fool! Do you have the faultless mouth of Jesus that can raise dead hearts with a single breath and revive them with the zest of love?”

“And let us assume you inherited Ali’s double-bladed sword, the Zulfiqar. But do you have the Lion of God Ali’s arms or muscles to swing the Zulfiqar?”

[The extraordinary feats prophets and saints display as a result of their exceptional reliance and submission to the Lord, are not standards we can imitate literally. They are simply events that have taken place to elicit our admiration, and increase our efforts and passion within our own capacity.

Even if done in a moment of excitement, it is presumptuous for a person, weak in both heart and spirit, to try to exhibit the remarkable acts of people who are like the stars in the spiritual skies. It is like expecting a fire not to burn, just because it did not burn **Abraham (AS)**, who “...submitted to the Lord of the worlds.” Clearly, without having Abraham’s (AS) purity of heart, such an attempt would end painfully.

Besides, wise people never ask Allah (JJ) to be tested with troubles and tribulations. However, when trouble comes down to them, they meet it with calm, composure and patience, knowing that Allah (JJ) would never burden a servant with more than he can bear and that every trouble from Allah (JJ) also comes with patience. Upon facing a trouble of any kind, they confess their weakness and seek refuge in Allah’s (JJ) mercy, and diligently stick to the etiquette of servanthood.

Failure to understand this nuance and asking Allah (JJ) for troubles simply because “Allah reserves the greatest tests for His most beloved servants”, is sheer arrogance. If Allah (JJ) was to really give the person the trouble he desires without providing its endurance, he could not help but get crushed under its weight.

The below incident from the time of Prophet (pbuh) underlines this wonderfully.

Anas (RA) explains:

“The Prophet (pbuh) visited a sick man, reduced almost to skin and bones. He asked:

“Did you ever pray to Allah about something or ask Him for a specific thing?”

“Yes. I used to pray, ‘My Lord, give me the punishment that awaits me in the afterlife, here and now”, the man replied.

The Prophet (pbuh) said:

“Subhanallah! You have no power to endure that. You should have instead prayed:

رَبَّنَا أَتَنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةٌ
وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

“Our Lord! Give us good in this life and good in the next; and protect us from the punishment of the Fire!” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 201)

The man then made that prayer and was cured.” (Muslim, Dhikr, 23; Tirmizi, Daawat, 71/3487)

On a side note, many people complain that their prayers are not being accepted, despite pleading so rigorously. It must be remembered that the acceptance of a prayer depends not on the tongue but on the heart. It is not the words that come out of the mouth that matter. What matters is how genuine the heart is and how close it is to its Lord.

This means that both speech and prayer come with a set of manners and conditions. Making big claims or promising to do certain things that are clearly beyond reach, only puts the person on the spot and places him in a difficult situation.

Abdullah ibn Amr (RA) had pledged to fast every day and recite the entire Qur'an each night without sleep. When the Prophet (pbuh) got word of this, he advised him to do things in moderation. He recommended Abdullah (RA) fast for three days a month and take a month to recite the entire Qur'an; and that it would be a lot better if he observed the needs of his own body and the rights of his family and guests.

Still, Abdullah (RA) persistently insisted he was capable of doing a lot more and asked the Prophet (pbuh) to increase these deeds. As a result, the Prophet (pbuh) advised him to fast every second day like David (AS) and recite the Qur'an in a week. Yet, Abdullah (RA) had not been able to grasp the wisdom behind the Prophet's (pbuh) initial advice. And when old age caught up with him and took away his youthful energy, he confessed that he struggled to keep the promise he had once made, and lamented:

“If only I had followed the Prophet's (pbuh) recommendation.”¹⁵

15. See, Bukhari, Sawm, 55, 56, 57, Tahajjud, 7, Anbiya 37, Nikah 89; Muslim, Siyam, 181-193.

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“The Noble Qur'an describes the mindset and qualities of prophets come to life. If you recite the Qur'an and practice it, count yourself as having met prophets and saints! But if you do not obey the Qur'an's commands and embody its morals despite reciting it, then what benefit could there be in seeing prophets and saints?!”

[Sufism is the way of following what is in the Qur'an and Sunnah. The Prophet (pbuh) and his true heirs simply aimed to take people by the hand to the peaceful place of the Qur'an and Sunnah. The degree to which we stick to the path of the Qur'an and Sunnah is therefore also the biggest sign that we truly follow the Prophet (pbuh).]

A striking example of this is provided by Abdulkadir Keçeoğlu, better known as Yaman Dede, who was our Persian teacher during my years at Imam Hatip High School.

The late and precious Yaman Dede was a former Christian who, after finding guidance through Rumi and his *Mathnawi*, became a devoted lover of Allah (JJ) and His Messenger (pbuh). During class, he would talk a little about Persian grammar and then proceed to write on the blackboard a passage from Rumi in Persian. And then with teary eyes, he would go on to interpret it at length.

One day, a student politely asked him, “Why do you talk of Rumi and the *Mathnawi* so much?”

“Son”, he said, “it was Rumi who took me by the hand to the Prophet's (pbuh) door and caused my conversion to Islam. And I cannot possibly speak enough of a man who has saved me from the fire!”

So, let us pause for a moment and assess how much our hearts embody the conducts of prophets and saints.

- If we really love our Prophet (pbuh) and the righteous people loved by Allah (JJ), how much effort are we showing to be like them?

- If our Prophet (pbuh) and the spiritual masters saw us, how much would they really condone our states and behaviour?

- Would our level of attachment to them cause them to smile back at us with satisfaction or -God forbid- give us a stern look?

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“The belly of the flesh drags man towards the hay barn, whereas the belly of the heart takes him to the gardens of basil.”

“An animal that feeds on hay and barley is only good for slaughter in the eid of sacrifice; but a man who feeds on the light of Truth becomes a living Qur'an!”

[Man has a dual composition: one is of soil, while the other is spiritual. While we need to consume nutrients to sustain the former, we also have a spiritual composition, into which the Almighty has breathed a spirit and which therefore belongs to a realm beyond and this is also in need of nutrients.

The spirit feeds, first and foremost, on belief; then on knowledge and love of the Lord, as well as sincerity, piety, erudition and wisdom. A heart that receives these nutrients walks on the Lord's path confidently, with firm and strong steps. On the other hand, those who neglect their spiritual food and worry only about filling their stomachs ultimately tumble into neglect.

A wise man has said it wonderfully:

“For the wise, this world is a stage to grasp wisdoms, unravel secrets and behold divine art; while for the fool, it is only to satisfy his appetite and revel in lust.”

Even though it is destined for the grave, a neglectful person is primarily concerned with protecting his body from all kinds of harm, feeding it with the most delicious food and chasing its pleasures, while not expending even a fraction of that energy for his spirit.

Yet, what distinguishes man from the rest of creation, is the attention he pays to his spiritual life. Only the concern to provide for his spirit and an enthusiasm to reunite with his Lord, can set him on the path to becoming a 'perfect human being' (*insan al-kamil*). This is where his true honour and dignity lies.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“What the young see in the mirror, the old see a lot more in a brick.”

[Human beings go through a stage of naivety during childhood, a phase of vigour until the age of forty and a period of intense contemplation of the Next World. As man gets older, his life experience also increases and the more he observes the correlation between causes and effects, he develops more accurate judgments on the consequences of the events he encounters.

To prevent us from repeating the mistakes of the past, the Almighty tells us, in the Qur'an, the stories of bygone nations. By doing so, He teaches us about the repercussions of our actions on the individual and society as a whole.

In that regard, those wishing to take firm steps into the future must read past events with a reflective eye and lend ear to the advice of those with a wealth of experience. Those who ignore the sweet warnings of elders face no other prospect than to taste bitter consequences.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“The night gives birth to whatever it is pregnant with.”

[A spiritually dark night never leads to a day of spiritual sunshine. Those who do not appreciate the value of the night can never cherish the value of the day. The daytime of a person who carelessly condemns his entire night to sleep, is generally uninspired and spiritually devoid. Therefore, we must avoid bringing languor to our hearts by spending the whole night a slave to sleep.

At dawn, the Lord offers distinct signs for hearts that hear and see. During that time when the air is as gentle as a zephyr, flowers release wonderful scents and roosters start crowing without delay, the Almighty offers a unique opportunity to His servants who seek closeness to Him.

To begin the day inspired and in high spirits, a person must take the spiritual nourishment by getting up before dawn with deeds of worship. That way, the inspiration obtained can protect a person from neglect

throughout the day and boost his passion for the good and his resistance to evil.

And to make it to the evening with the same inspired heart, one must protect his eyes, ears, tongue and all his limbs from evil. Just as the sun sets so that the moon can light up the night and the moon departs to make way for the sun, we must use our days to inject spirit into our nights and nights to reinforce our days; and by doing so, strive to live an inspired life.

Saints are fully aware of this, as they make the most of the dawn's inspiration and stress the importance of spending that special time in worship.

Bayezid Bistami (May Allah have mercy on him) has said:

“No mystery has ever unravelled itself to me, until my nights turned into days.”

If we spend our nights vigilantly and revive our dawns with the *tahajjud* prayer, divine remembrance and repentance, then -God-willing- our nights will become even brighter than our days.

May our Lord grant us all this beautiful state of being.

And in line with the truth that “When man is alive, he is asleep. When he dies, he wakes up”, may He give us the strength at night to wake up from ‘death’s sister’ sleep, solely for Him; and let us in on the secret of “*dying we die*.”

Amin!...





WORDS OF WISDOM FROM

Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him)



Words of Wisdom From Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him) - 4

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“The ritual prayer you offer becomes your shepherd; it saves you from evil and the wolves!”

Every deed of worship our Lord has commanded us is a means of peace, comfort and joy. The Almighty does not need our prayers. We need to seek refuge in Him through ritual prayer and other deeds of worship.

Acts of worship are like vitamins injected into the spirit strengthening our resistance against immorality and every action that distances us from our Lord.

In the old times, people used to flock inside sturdy castles during an enemy attack. Ritual prayer is our means to seek Allah's (JJ) protection from the onslaught of the lower desires of the ego and the impulses inspired by Satan. In conformity with the Qur'an's declaration about **“...those who are constant in prayer”** (Al-Maarij, 70: 23), those who are able to wear this spiritual armour are able to maintain the mindset of servanthood at all times. In doing so, they receive divine help and gain a spiritual resistance against sin and rebellious behaviour.



The Almighty, in fact, states:

“You who believe! Seek help through patience and prayer...”
(Al-Baqarah, 2: 153). The incident below also offers wonderful testimony on how fruitful it is to seek refuge in Allah (JJ):

When Prophet Ibrahim (AS) entered Egypt with his family, the Pharaoh's guards took Ibrahim and his wife Sarah to the royal court, as they found Sarah to be a beautiful woman. Sarah immediately offered a two-rakat prayer (two cycles of standing bowing and prostrating) and sought Allah's (JJ) refuge from the evils of the Pharaoh. When the Pharaoh tried to make his move on her, all of a sudden Allah filled his heart with fear, he became terrified and began to shake. Not long after, he commanded his men to let her go. He even gifted them Hajar and ordered their immediate release. So Allah saved Sarah from the evils of the Pharaoh, through her ritual prayer.

Especially during the tumult of this final hour, where major wrong actions and corruption have soared, it is of great importance to seek refuge in Allah (JJ) through ritual prayer. We must strive to live with the inspiration for all kinds of deeds of worship, not only for protection from the tribulations of the age, but also for resistance against the ambitions of the ego and the temptations of Satan.

The Qur'an says:

“...and establish the prayer. The prayer precludes indecency and wrongdoing.” (Al-Ankabut, 29: 45)

That is to say, a person who prays properly must not display any traits of immorality or other evils. A person who continues to commit wrong actions despite praying regularly, must take a good look at the depth of his prayer. He must identify what he is doing wrong and strive to correct his mistakes.

A prominent *tabiun* generation scholar, Abu'l Aliyah, says:

“When visiting someone to collect a hadith, we used to first look at how he prayed. If he prayed with poise and focus, we would then sit next to him, assuming ‘he must approach all his tasks in such beautiful manner’. But if he

prayed heedlessly, we would get up and leave, thinking 'he must have a negligent approach to matters in general.'” (Darimi, Muqaddimah, 38/429)

This means that ritual prayer is a mirror to a person's true spiritual character.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Come to your senses and look to benefit from prayer not just externally but also internally! Like a bird that collects seed, do not just lay your forehead on the ground and lift it back up, oblivious to Allah's glory! Lend an ear to the Prophet's words, when he says:

‘The worst thieves are those who steal from their own prayer.’”¹⁶

[The Almighty mentions ritual prayer in the Qur'an on 99 occasions. Not only does He command us to «صلّ» pray, he also orders us to «أقم الصلوة» establish the prayer.

To establish the prayer, is to give it its due and to adhere to all of its external and internal conditions, praying it in a measured manner with harmony between the heart and the body.

The Almighty wants us to take so much care in our prayer that after doing the ritual washing (*wudu*) in preparation for it, He commands:

“Children of Adam! wear fine clothing in every mosque!” (Al-Araf, 7: 31)

Again, to ensure that we attain salvation, the Almighty commands that in our prayer we have “**humility**” (*khushu*):

“It is the believers who are successful: those who are humble in their prayer.” (Al-Muminun, 23: 1-2)

A man once asked **Bahauddin Naqshiband (May Allah have mercy on him)** how to be humble in the prayer.

“Through four things”, he said, before adding:

1. Eat only permissible food,

16. Hakim, *Mustadrak*, I, 353.

2. Be alert during *wudu*,
3. Know that one enters into the divine presence with the first *takbir*,
4. And do not forget the Allah even outside prayer.

In other words, to protect ourselves from error, we need to ensure that our hearts are with our Lord even when we are not praying. The Qur'an states:

"Only in the remembrance of Allah can the heart find peace!" (Al-Rad, 13: 28)

"Do not be like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves. Such people are the deviators." (Al-Hashr, 59: 19)

Clearly, abiding by these conditions is necessary to derive the most out of prayer, and tap into the inspiration and peace of the heart it has to offer. Otherwise, a prayer will not be anything more than a hollow repetition of bodily movements.

Our Prophet (pbuh) has, in fact, said:

"A servant prays; but is only rewarded for half of it, a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, a seventh, an eighth, a ninth or even a tenth." (Abu Dawud, Salat, 123, 124)

We must therefore make our prayers resemble those of **our Prophet (pbuh)**, who has also said:

"Pray the way you have seen me pray..." (Bukhari, Azan, 18)

The Prophet's (pbuh) instruction does not just relate to the outward motions of prayer. We must also follow the example of his composure (*tадil-i arkan*), and especially his level of humility (*khushu*).

The Prophet (pbuh) states:

"To show focus during prayer is to be humble and submissive..." (Tirmizi, Salat, 166)

"When you stand to pray, offer it like it is your last prayer!" (Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 15)

The companion **Abdullah ibn Shihhir** (RA) recounts **the Prophet's** (pbuh) state during the prayer as follows:

“Once I went next to the Messenger of Allah (pbuh). He was on his feet praying; and his chest was emitting sounds like that of a boiling cauldron.”
(Abu Dawud, Salat, 158)

Our mother **Aisha** (RA) narrates:

“When the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) stood to pray, you could hear a sound very much like a boiling cauldron, coming from his heart. Once the adhan would sound, it was like he could no longer recognise anyone around him, due to the fact he was about to enter the presence of Allah.” (Abu Dawud, Salat, 157; Nasai, Sahw, 18)

Among the brilliant figures who followed the Prophet's (pbuh) example every step of the way, was **Umar ibn Al-Khattab** (RA). When he became fatally wounded during an assassination, he passed out from losing too much blood, and could not be revived. It was only during the times of ritual prayer when someone would whisper in his ear:

“Prayer, Umar; prayer!” that Umar (RA) would rise with an astonishing display of willpower, and offer his prayer. Afterwards, he would say:

“*He who has no prayer, has no place in Islam!*” Then, he would, once again, pass out.

During one battle, **Ali ibn Abi Talib** (RA) had an arrow lodged in his foot and the pain was so severe that it could not be pulled out.

“Try again while I am praying”, Ali (RA) suggested. They did; and this time, they pulled the arrow out with ease. When Ali (RA) completed the prayer and asked:

“How did it go?” they replied:

“We have removed it!”

This shows that whilst in prayer, Ali (RA) was so absorbed in worship that he was totally absent from this world to such an extent that it even made him unaware of physical pain.

As far as we are concerned, it is without doubt that attaining this kind of spiritual depth during prayer is like trying to reach out for the stars. We may not be able to achieve that level; yet the closer we get to it, the more benefit we will draw from the prayer.

Still, by declaring “**Prostrate and draw near!**” (Al-Alaq, 96: 19), the Almighty orders us to offer prayers of a quality that take us closer to Him. Thus, while placing our foreheads on the ground, our hearts should also be pleading and imploring in Allah’s (JJ) presence. Just as the Kaba is the *qibla* of our body, we should be aware that the *qibla* of our hearts is the Lord of the Kaba. Even though we cannot see Him, we should strive to pray with an awareness that He sees us at all times, so that our prayers become our ascension (*Miraj*) to the Lord.

Another important condition for establishing the prayer for men is to offer them in congregation in the mosque. **Our Prophet** (pbuh) placed so great an emphasis on offering prayer in congregation that upon entering the masjid, he would cast an eye over to see who was absent. If he did not see any given person for three days, he would inquire about him. If the person was far, the Prophet (pbuh) would pray for his wellbeing. If he was at home or sick, the Prophet (pbuh) would visit him.¹⁷

The below incident indicates just how seriously the Prophet (pbuh) took congregational prayer:

The companion **Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum** (RA), who was blind, once asked the Prophet (pbuh):

“Messenger of Allah! Medina has plenty of venomous pests and deadly animals. (I fear they may harm me; so can I have permission to pray at home?)”

Our Prophet (pbuh) replied:

“*Are you able to hear the adhan when it says ‘Hasten to prayer’ and ‘Hasten to success? If yes, then rush to the masjid!*” (See, Abu Dawud, Salat, 46/553)

17. See, Haythami, II, 295.

How noteworthy it is that the Prophet (pbuh) said this to a blind companion, who had no one to escort him to the mosque and back, and who therefore faced the threat of venomous animals. As for us, we must pause to think how terrible a waste and neglect it is to refrain from the congregational prayer without any legitimate excuse.

We must also be extremely mindful to endear this deed of worship, which is a pillar of Islam, to our children. True to the saying, ‘The tree only bends when it’s young’, we must get our children into the habit of praying at a young age, take them to the mosque, encourage them with gifts; and with kindness and love, teaching them the importance and value of the prayer. We must never be slack in this duty.

Also, we must never forget that children are born with a purity that is worthy of paradise. Yet, if parents neglect their spiritual education, God-forbid, they will then fly these birds of paradise towards the wrong destination.

Considering the Almighty casts “**Shame!**” even on those who pray carelessly, we must reflect on how tragic a situation it must be to not pray at all.

The Qur'an tells us that the people of paradise will call out to the dwellers of hell from a distance:

“What caused you to enter the scorching Fire? They will say, ‘We were not among those who did the prayer.’” (Al-Muddaththir, 74: 42-43)

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“A person who does not clean his heart and have good conduct is mute, even if he speaks a hundred languages.”

[The character of a person whose words contradict his actions calls into question the things he says. The words spoken by a man who fails to practice what he preaches and back up his talk with good morals and conduct, are nothing more than empty arguments.

The Almighty warns us against this kind of behaviour:

“You who believe! why do you say what you do not do? It is deeply abhorrent to Allah that you should say what you do not do.” (Al-Saff, 61: 2-3)

And in chapter Al-Jumuah, Allah (JJ) likens scholars of the tribe of Israel who read yet do not practice the Torah and flinch at following divine commands despite knowing them well, to donkeys loaded with books.

As Abu Bakr As-Siddiq (RA) has said:

“Words do not please Allah unless they come with action.”

It is clear that unless we back up what we say with action, we cannot expect our words to yield any positive results. Only words that come from the bottom of a genuine heart find a way into another. In contrast, words from an insincere heart that leisurely roll off the tongue never make an impact on another heart. They only enter from one ear and swiftly exit from the other.

The companions were so sensitive on this matter that despite traversing long distances just to learn a hadith from a man, they quickly turned back after witnessing him tricking his horse with an empty satchel, seeing this defect of character as unacceptable for someone teaching hadith.

Sincerity, honesty, truthfulness and loyalty must regulate a Muslim’s entire mindset and behaviour. It is also the aim of the Sufi path to construct a Muslim character that is honest and upright; and strike a harmony between the heart and the body. In the words of Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him), it is the art of knowing how to *“Appear as you are and be as you appear.”*

Besides, there comes a point when lies and insincere words give themselves away and are laid bare by the eyes of the prudent.

When the Prophet Yusuf’s (AS) brothers came running to their father Prophet Yaqub (AS) with a bloodied shirt, claiming “Yusuf has been mauled by a wolf”, Yaqub (AS) instantly remarked:

“What a compassionate wolf it must have been that it tore your brother to pieces but left his shirt untouched!” It only took Prophet Yaqub (AS) a second to fling their lie back in their faces.

This is because the face reflects the self. As much as man expresses himself through his tongue, he also does so through his eyes, his features and his overall condition and behaviour. Through the tension or calmness of his face, or the anxiety or coolness that reflects in his voice, each person speaks his own distinct language of the particular state he is in which we call “language of state” (*lisan-i hal*). Even in silence, man can use this language to explain so many things and as a matter of fact, body language is often louder and more effective than words spoken by the tongue.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“A preacher of action is better than a preacher of words.”

[From the moment he began calling people to Islam, **the Prophet** (pbuh) became the quintessential Muslim and living embodiment of the good, by obeying the divine prohibitions and commands more than any other person. The Prophet (pbuh) became a benchmark and model for mankind for always being the first to practice what he preached.

For those in a position of counselling people, it is therefore vital that they are on the right track. One cannot possibly offer a drink from an empty glass.

The Ottomans always settled the morally good and untainted people of Anatolia in the lands they conquered, so that the non-Muslim locals could witness the beauty of the correct Muslim character and courtesy first hand.

After **Sultan Murad I** conquered Kosovo, his successors resettled some of the virtuous people of Anatolia in the area. The locals were so struck by their wholesome way of life, that 90% of Albanians ended up becoming Muslim.

Similarly, in the years that followed his conquest of Istanbul, **Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror** captured Bosnia and transferred some of Anatolia’s most kind-hearted people to the land and the Bosniaks were so enam-

oured by these newcomers exhibiting the beauty of Islam in their conduct, that free of any coercion, they all entered Islam.

The point is that when calling people to the truth, guiding them to the good and deterring them from the wrong, one's personal condition must be in harmony with the words he speaks.

On word from an exemplary Muslim, whose life displays living samples of Islam's character, is far more effective than the most splendid quotes and even the most eloquent words spoken by a person whose words and conduct are in conflict, have no effect on people's hearts.

Ziya Pasha rightly says:

“The deeds are a person’s mirror; words merit no stare!”]

May our Lord grant us a place among His honest servants whose words reflect their hearts and who confirm their faith with conduct, by which the rest of believers recognise them as good-standing Muslims.

Amin!...





WORDS OF WISDOM FROM

Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him)



Words of Wisdom From Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him) - 5

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“The winds of anger, lust and ambition blow away the person who does not offer the prayer of the heart.”

“As for the slave of lust, he is more worthless in the sight of Allah than slaves who are bought and sold.”

[The prayer of the heart is a measured prayer that gives each section of the prayer its due (*tadil-i arkan*) and is performed with full humility (*khu-shu*), where the heart is fully turned to the Lord. Even if they reign in luxury in this life, those detained by their whims and desires, deprived of the strength to pray from the heart, will be debased beggars in the Next World.

On the other hand, those who turn away from the whims and desires of their egos for the sake of Allah (JJ) and stick to praying with consistency and resolution, will be the kings of the afterlife, even if they live like slaves on earth.

The below incident is wonderful testimony.



Our Prophet (pbuh) once visited the market in Medina and a African slave¹⁸ was being sold at an auction. The slave, already a Muslim, announced:

“I have one condition for whoever will end up buying me.” A suitor asked:

“What is your condition?”

“You will not stop me from performing my daily prayers behind Allah’s Messenger,” the slave replied. The man accepted his condition and purchased the slave.

In the days that followed, the Prophet (pbuh) would always notice the slave at the mosque. One day, however, he looked around and could not see him.

“Where is your servant?” he asked the slave’s owner.

“Messenger of Allah, he has contracted yellow fever”, the man explained.

The Prophet (pbuh) turned to his companions and said:

“Let us go and see him.” So, they visited him and extended their well-wishes.

A few days later, the Prophet (pbuh) once again asked:

“How is your servant doing?”. This time, the man replied:

“He is about to die, Messenger of Allah.”

On hearing this, the Prophet (pbuh) immediately went to the slave and shortly after that the slave died. The Prophet (pbuh) personally washed the man’s corpse, shrouded him and prepared him for the grave.

The companions were taken aback by the whole scene. The Muhajir commented:

18. Due to the laws of war, slavery has existed since the beginning of recorded history. Islam, however, introduced measures to promote freeing slaves and also make their purchase more difficult. And consequently, it was Islam that removed the chains of slavery off the neck of humanity.

“We left our land, wealth and families behind just to come here. Yet, Allah’s Messenger has not given any of us the treatment he has given to this slave; neither in illness nor death.”

Likewise, the Ansar remarked:

“And we took the Messenger of Allah in as a guest and supported him physically and financially; yet he has preferred an Abyssinian slave to us.”

It was then that the Almighty revealed the following:

“The Noblest among you in Allah’s sight is the one with the most taqwa (fear of Allah).” (Al-Hujurat, 49: 13)

What made a slave so precious in the sight of Allah and His Messenger was the *taqwa* in his heart and especially his devotion to ritual prayer. The man had never made any worldly requests; all he wanted was to not be deprived of the chance to offer his obligatory prayers in congregation behind the Prophet (pbuh). His personal qualities that attracted divine and prophetic praise were none other than his passion to be in the Prophet’s (pbuh) company and desire to offer his prayers with the community.

Without doubt, this kind of passion and love for prayer is a manifestation of the love of Allah (JJ) deep within the heart. A person who loves Allah (JJ) will also lovingly fulfil His commands. We should also patiently and tirelessly try to do the things Allah (JJ) loves, so that Allah (JJ) loves us. If He loves us, He will also make us love the deeds He loves and give us the power to perform them with an indescribable passion.

While on the subject, I would also like to share a personal memory.

A young African man once approached me and said:

“Master, say a prayer for me, too.”

I inquired, “What is it that you wish for, son? What kind of troubles do you face that you are asking me to pray for you?”

The reason why I asked is that young people generally asked for a prayer for matters like passing an exam, finding a job or getting married.

Simply for worldly affairs but what this young man was asking for, was something else altogether:

“Master, pray for me so that Allah makes me truly love ritual prayer!”

Loving prayer should be the aim and ideal of every Muslim, as this love is a sign of loving Allah (JJ) and it was as though the sincere request of this young African man carried traces of Dawud’s (AS) own appeal. As the hadith informs us:

“Prophet Dawud used to pray:

‘O Allah! I ask of You for Your love, the love of the people You love and the deeds that will deliver me to Your love.

‘O Allah! Make Your love more appealing to me than myself, my family and cold water!’ (Tirmizi, Daawat, 72)

Again, the young man’s request was also evocative of Ibrahim’s (AS) own heartache, which spilled over into the words:

“My Lord! Make me and my descendants, people who establish the prayer! My Lord! Accept my prayer!” (Ibrahim, 14: 40)

This shows that the desire for both themselves and their future generations to maintain ritual prayer occupied the minds of prophets and what an favour it is to remain conscious of the Lord and ask him to fill our hearts with the love of prayer.

Our Prophet (pbuh) said, “*Prayer has been made the coolness of my eye*”¹⁹ The Qur'an commands us to pray that it also becomes the coolness of our children’s eyes.²⁰ We must therefore teach our children the importance of prayer and instil in them a discipline to maintain it, so that they become the coolness and refreshment of our own eyes and a means of ongoing charity long after we are gone.

19. Nasai, Ishratu'n-Nisa, 10; Ahmed, III, 128, 199.

20. See, Al-Furqan, 74.

This was also the greatest worry of the female companions. If their children had not seen the Prophet (pbuh) in a while or had been held back from praying behind him at the mosque, they would straightaway caution them and ask them to make amends.

Now, from today onward, let us accustom our children to ritual prayer and mosques, so that when we are lowered into our graves, we are not deprived from the ongoing charity their prayers will bring.

Remember that **Our Blessed Prophet** (pbuh) has informed us that the prayer will be the first thing we will be called to account for on the Day of Judgment. If we are found to have maintained our prayers in the way Allah (JJ) had wanted, we will be saved. Otherwise, we are doomed.²¹

Right before giving his final breath, **Our Prophet** (pbuh), ever so merciful and compassionate, pronounced “*Fear Allah regarding to prayer!*”, and repeated those words three times. After offering some more advice, he again repeated “*Prayer, prayer!...*”, shortly after this his blessed soul departed to his Lord.²²

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“When a Muslim abandons the Sunnah and the community he does nothing but spilling his own blood in the valley of wild beasts?”

“The Sunnah is a road, while the community is like a friend on the journey. A man without a road or friends to travel with, will face difficulties and be needy.”

[The Lord’s mercy is on the community. A hadith states:

“There is mercy in community, and anguish in separation.” (Munawi, III, 470)

In another hadith, **the Prophet** (pbuh) says:

21. Tirmizi, Salat, 188/413; Nasai, Salat, 9/462.

22. See, Bayhaki, Shuab, VII, 477.

“The devil is man’s wolf; like a wolf which snatches sheep that have strayed from the herd. Do not splinter into groups! Do not abandon the community, society and mosques!” (Ahmed, II, 400; V, 335; Hakim, I, 73/59)

Islam forbids individualism, selfishness and drawing into one’s shell estranged from society. In contrast, it orders selflessness and closeness with fellow members of the community, socialising with them and helping them out in times of need. Without doubt, one of the best ways of doing this is through offering prayers in congregation at mosques, which are the houses of Allah (JJ), the mark of Islam and symbols of Muslim unity.

Attending mosques on a regular basis and praying in congregation is, in fact, such a strong sunnah (*Sunna-muakkada*) of the Prophet (pbuh) that it verges on being compulsory. Some schools of Islamic jurisprudence view it as compulsory upon at least some members of the community (*fard al-kifayah*), while others go so far as to deem it compulsory upon every individual (*fard al-ayn*).²³

The Prophet (pbuh) states:

“If you see a person who has made a habit of going to mosques, bear witness that he is Muslim; for the Almighty Allah has said:

“The mosques of Allah should only be frequented by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 18)” (Ibn Majah, Masajid, 19)

It is therefore clear that ‘frequenting mosques’, which is a sign of belief in Allah (JJ), means to revive and sustain mosques by offering prayers them, while at the same time, the entire surface of the earth has been rendered a ‘mosque’ for Muslims, the point is to fill the mosques of brick and mortar. A mosque without a congregation quickly becomes sad rubble and breathing life back into it, becomes the duty of every Muslim.

Our Prophet (pbuh), his companions and the other greats of Islam have set examples for us in their diligence towards praying in congregation. The companion **Abdullah ibn Masud** (RA) says:

23. See, Ahmed Naim, *Tecrid-i Sarih Tercümesi*, II, 604.

“Whosoever wishes to reunite with Allah tomorrow as a Muslim should continue offering his prayers at places where the adhan is called. Allah has certainly explained and commanded to your Prophet the ways of guidance. One of them is to offer prayers in congregation.

If, like this man over there, you abandon the congregation and pray at home, you will have abandoned your Prophet’s Sunnah. And if you abandon your Prophet’s Sunnah, you will fall into deviation.

Whosoever takes a nice ablution and then sets out toward one these mosques, for every step he takes, Allah will give him one reward, elevate him one degree and erase one sin.

By God, I do not remember any of us falling behind from congregation apart from one known as a hypocrite and I promise by Allah, if a person was sick, two people on either side would carry him to the mosque and help him stand in the row.” (Muslim, Masajid, 257)

Fadal ibn Ubayd (RA) recalls the enormous perseverance and effort shown by the Ahl A-Suffah (people of the bench) to offer their prayers in congregation despite their abject poverty:

“When Allah’s Messenger (pbuh) led his companions in prayer, some of them would collapse to the ground from exhaustion caused by hunger. These were the brothers of the Suffah. The bedouins of the desert would look at them in amazement. After finishing the prayer, the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) would go next to those who had fainted and console them with the words:

‘If only you knew what the Almighty Allah has prepared for you by His side, you would wish for even greater poverty and destitution.’” (Tirmizi, Zuhd, 39/2368)

The Almighty forbids abandoning prayer even during war, with the Qur'an revealing, in detail, how to offer it in congregation by taking turns.²⁴ This divine edict is rather meaningful for Muslims in showing just how essential prayer is to servanthood.

24. See, Al-Nisa, 102.

Also, recall that **Our Prophet** (pbuh) advised even a blind companion to pray at the mosque in congregation.

All these are merely a handful of examples that show just how sensitive and uncompromising the noble companions were to maintain their prayers in congregation.

Once the adhan would be heard, life would virtually stop around **the Prophet** (pbuh). As he was about to enter the presence of Allah (JJ), he would almost no longer recognise the people around him. He would offer the prayer at the earliest time possible and extend that devotional scrupulousness to his daily activities.

If we follow the Prophet's (pbuh) Sunnah by planning our daily activities around prayer and entering the presence of our Lord as soon as the adhan sounds with minds cleared of all things else, God-willing, we, too, will earn Allah's (JJ) pleasure and love. The care we show for our prayers will also shine inspiration and mercy on all aspects of our daily lives.

Let us not forget that prayer holds man back from what is evil both according to the Qur'an and to common sense. Prayer never obstructs a Muslim from good and legitimate action. Much to the contrary, the daily affairs of a Muslim who prays with proper measure and focus are infinitely more fruitful and productive.

A person, for instance, who parks his car as soon as he hears the adhan or gets off from a bus or train to join the congregation, will have most certainly cleared the way for a better and more peaceful trip. A Muslim who takes a break from work to pray, will tackle the rest of his work with greater ease. A student will notice how much clearer his mind is once he reopens his books, after having momentarily closed them to pray.

Muslims triumphant in showing this kind of excellence in their worship have a divine favour and help. These divine blessings are also on offer for us, only on the condition that, in the hustle of our daily lives, we show similar care in seeking Allah's (JJ) pleasure.

And indeed, the Almighty loves and praises His servants who embody such care in their deeds of worship:

“There are men who proclaim His glory morning and evening, not distracted by trade or commerce from the remembrance of Allah and the establishment of the prayer.” (Al-Nur, 24: 37)

It is thus clear that the Almighty wants nothing to get in the way of prayer; and He loves those who jump over all the hurdles to run to His presence.

There is also a stern warning for those who neglect the prayer and deeds of worship with excuses like being busy at work or with their wives and children:

“You who believe! Do not let your wealth and children divert you from the remembrance of Allah! Whoever does that is lost.” (Al-Munafiqun, 63: 9)]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Know that the Almighty Allah even told off the Prophet’s companions. During a year of famine, they had left the Friday prayer after hearing the drums of an incoming trade caravan.

They rushed there to get to the goods before anyone else could and seize them at a cheaper price.

Our Prophet was left stranded. No one had remained around him, apart from a few people bound to their religion.

For those who abandoned prayer, the Almighty asked, ‘How did the sound of the drums of trade lead you away from the Prophet’s company?’

You hurriedly scattered to buy wheat and left the Prophet standing on the mimbar alone.

You sowed the seeds of bad behaviour just to lay your hands on wheat; ignored and deserted the Messenger of Allah inside the mosque by himself.

Yet, his company is better than fun, games and wealth. Just look at who you abandoned for wheat? Rub your eyes and wake up from the slumber of neglect!

Your greed kept you from properly understanding the Almighty, when He said, 'It is I who provide everyone's food, and I am the best of providers!'

[Here, Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) expands on the incident mentioned in the 11th verse of Chapter Al-Jumuah:

It is narrated that during a time of famine in Medina, our **Prophet** (pbuh) was giving a Friday sermon when a caravan filled with foodstuff passed nearby. On hearing the caravan's drums, most of the congregation ran out, except for just twelve people who remained by the Prophet's (pbuh) side. After this incident, the Allah revealed the following to warn the companions and all believers until the final hour, about the perils of missing out on eternal rewards for fleeting profits:

“But when they see a chance of trade or entertainment, they scatter off to it and leave you standing there. Say: ‘What is with Allah is better than trade or entertainment. Allah is the Best of Providers.’” (Al-Jumuah, 62: 11)

Nowadays, reasons like financial distress, ambitions to get ahead in life or desires for fame and fortune hold many people back from fulfilling their duties of worship, even though this is their reason for being sent into this world in the first place. We have not been sent to earth to possess the worldly things in it; we have been sent merely to bear witness on it and we remain in this guesthouse to prove through our deeds of worship that we are Allah's (JJ) witnesses on the earth. Brushing our deeds of worship aside and acting like owners in this guesthouse, insatiably carrying on with the illusion that we will end up completing the world's endless tasks, is a cause of terrible disaster.

A person must certainly work in legitimate fields to seek his provision but he must never use this as an excuse to neglect his duties towards his Lord. He must always bear in mind that the slightest action that can attract the pleasure of Allah (JJ) is incalculably more precious than this world and everything in it.

An example of this is the below incident narrated by Abu Hurayrah (RA):

The Prophet (pbuh) had once sent troops to a mission. Soon after, they returned with major spoils. **Abu Bakr** (RA) commented:

“Messenger of Allah! I do not think we have ever seen troops return quicker with so many spoils!”

Allah’s Messenger (pbuh) then said:

*“Should I tell you of a deed that returns quicker with even greater spoils? If a person performs his Wudu in the proper way, offers his dawn prayer and follows it up with a duha prayer, he will not only return a lot quicker but with even greater earnings.”*²⁵ The Prophet (pbuh) thus uncovered a wise example which sheds light on the unseen reality of life.

Similarly, saints able to gaze at life through the same window are astonished by those who do not even notice what they lose spiritually despite being utterly devastated by their material losses. The great **Hatem Asam** complains:

“Only Abu Ishaq sent his condolences when I missed out on offering one prayer in congregation. Yet, if I had lost a child, more than ten thousand people may have come to extend their condolences. That is because people perceive troubles that afflict their religion as lighter than the troubles of the world.” (Ghazzali, *Ihya*, I, 136)

It is unfortunate that praying in congregation, which is an exceptionally strong sunnah, is no longer given the importance it deserves. The reality is harsher considering that we descend from a ‘righteous community’, who, over the centuries, sprinkled the lands they conquered with domes and built not only grand mosques in city centres, but also smaller ones in the enclaves of neighbourhoods, so that no one would be deprived of the opportunity to pray congregation.

If we desert these mosques today, how will we look our ancestors in the face tomorrow on judgment day? What will become of us, if on the field of

25. Ibn Hibban, *Sahih*, VI/XVIII, 276, Beirut, 1993.

resurrection, we flock the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) to intercede on our behalf, only to be met with his reproach and reprimand for neglecting this vital sunnah?

May the Almighty Allah give all of us the strength to prostrate in a way that takes us closer to Him, grant us the chance to pray to Him as if we are journeying on a *Miraj*, allow us to be among those Muslims who sustain and maintain mosques by regularly attending the congregation. May He open all our hearts to the spirit of unity and community that Islam teaches, and let this be a means of reviving and saving the Prophet's (pbuh) community from their current distress and oppression.

Amin!...





WORDS OF WISDOM FROM

Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him)



Words of Wisdom From Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him) - 6

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Ramadan has come. Withdraw your hand from physical food so that you receive spiritual food from the heavens. This is a month of feasts for the heart. It is when the heart is saved from the flaws of the flesh. It is the month when hearts are filled with love and faith.”

[On the calendar of life, Ramadan is a unique month of mercy and grace. It is the most fertile season for spiritual earnings. It is an enormous gift by the Lord to the Muhammadan community. For believers, it is a divine treasure packed with spiritual gems. A hadith, in fact, states:

“If people knew the rewards of Ramadan, they would wish for Ramadan to span all year...” (Haythami, V. III, p. 141)

Most certainly, servanthood to the Almighty is not a ceremony reserved to specific times but an obligation that covers our entire lifespan. Each moment offers a chance to reap divine pleasure. With that said, just as the dawn holds a special place in the day, as Friday does in the week, Ramadan has a unique position among the months of the year.



The blessed month of Ramadan is when the Almighty invites His servants to form a closer bond. For those who accept the invitation, it marks an exclusive season for rewards. Just as athletes may retreat to training camps and cut off their contact with the outside world to prepare for competitions, for Muslims, the month of Ramadan offers a similar time to reduce their worldly interests and concentrate on seeking closeness to Allah. It is a time to withdraw from everything that takes one away from the Lord and make the most of the month to earn Allah's (JJ) pleasure.

We should think:

How much do we tire ourselves working for the world? How much time, money and effort do we spare to reach our worldly pursuits?

So, in this holy month, we should be like soldiers in mobilising and maximising all our energy to reach our eternal pursuits, reinforce our spirits, develop our hearts, perfect our duties to the Lord and get closer to Him.

To do that, we must first appreciate the value of this exceptional gift from the Lord. Ramadan is the month of increase, in which every good deed is rewarded many more times than normal. It is home to the *Laylatul-Qadr* (night of power) which is better than a thousand months and those who make the most of this night, will attain countless blessings. Those heedless to the month and waste it in neglect, will face sheer deprivation.

The Prophet (pbuh) has informed us of how devastating it is to be unmindful of a divine gift of the scale of Ramadan:

“Jibril (AS) appeared to me and said, ‘May the person who lives to see Ramadan unable to have his sins forgiven, be distant from mercy!’ And I said, ‘Amin!’” (See, Hakim, IV, 170/7256; Tirmizi, Daawat, 100/3545)

People oblivious to this season of spiritual profit are like those who die of starvation despite sitting on a treasure chest. It calls to mind a rocky terrain unable to absorb any water, even though it has just been soaked under the April showers.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) allegorically gives a voice to fasting:

“Fasting says, ‘My Lord! This Muslim servant of Yours did not eat even what is halal or drink despite being thirsty, just to obey Your command! How can this believer now find the strength to lay his hands on the haram?”

[The trademark of the blessed month of Ramadan is fasting, which teaches us how to avoid the *haram* by keeping us away from the *halal*, even if it be for a limited time. From this perspective, fasting is the process of building a strong willpower that can be harnessed to avoid temptations in all aspects of life. It is a unique form of spiritual discipline that keeps the soul away from evil. It is like a vitamin injected into the spirit to give it enough power to resist the onslaughts of the ego.

If fasting shields a believer from the flames of hell in the afterlife, it is also a means in this life keeping guard against forbidden things, which are rooted in hell. It trains the heart to steer clear of wrong action, especially backbiting, gossip and extravagance.

As careful as we are not to let anything through our mouths while fasting, we must be equally cautious not to let anything bad come out of our mouths, so we don't lose the blessings of our fasting.

The below incident from the time of the Prophet (pbuh) serves as a clear example:

The Prophet's (pbuh) freed slave **Ubayd** (RA) recounts:

It was around noon, when a man came and said:

“Messenger of Allah! The two women over there are fasting and are almost about to die from thirst. (So, allow them to break their fast.)”

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) looked away and did not respond. The man repeated his words:

“Messenger of Allah! I swear they are about to die.”

“*Call them over here*”, said the Prophet (pbuh).

The women arrived. The Prophet (pbuh) asked for a bowl; and handing it to one of the women, said:

“Remove what you have inside!” The woman vomited blood, pus and flesh, filling around half the bowl.

The Prophet (pbuh) asked the other woman to do the same. And she, too, vomited flesh and blood, filling the entire bowl. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) thereupon said:

“These women abstained from what Allah has decreed permissible and fasted; yet broke their fasts with what Allah has decreed impermissible. One sat next to the other and they started to eat people’s flesh (began to gossip).” (Ahmed, V, 431; Haythami, III, 171)

The Qur'an, in fact, declares:

“...Do not backbite one another. Would any of you like eat your brother’s dead flesh? No, you would hate it!” (Al-Hujurat, 49: 12) This shows how great a crime it is in the sight of Allah (JJ).

It appears that fasting in the truest sense of the word requires us to abstain from all activities Allah (JJ) dislikes. Ali (RA) says:

“While taking care in offering good deeds, show even greater care to have them accepted and protected.”

That is to say, as important as it is to do good, it is just as important to make sure the deed is done without losing its rewards. In this regard, the below incident offers a wonderful glimpse into the sensitivity shown by wise Muslims:

Abdullah ibn Dahlawi was fasting one day, when people next to him started backbiting the sultan.

“Oh no, we just broke our fast!” he exclaimed.

One of his students remarked, “But sir, it was not you who was gossiping!”

He replied, “Yes, it was not us but we listened to it. The gossip and the listener are the same.”²⁶

26. Abdulgani ibn Said, *Hüvelgani Risâlesi*, p. 152.

Just as the Allah the Almighty has banned gossiping, He has also banned us from listening to it. That is because eavesdropping on a gossip is practically the same as gossiping.

While we are on the subject, let us remind ourselves that backbiting is also a serious violation of personal rights. Violating the rights of another person is a crime Allah (JJ) has left outside His clemency. Therefore, anyone who speaks ill of another Muslim behind his back, should immediately seek out that person and ask for forgiveness. But while asking for forgiveness, he should genuinely admit, 'I said such and such things about you and such and such people were around me...' And if his gossip has led to a trouble of any kind, he should repent, give charity, and shed tears for Allah (JJ).

This shows that gossiping is among the severest violations of personal rights and one of the most difficult to recompense. Instead of backbiting and having to worry about making amends, it is therefore best to avoid it altogether.

In short, a person who is fasting must block his senses to all conduct, starting with gossiping, which the Almighty has forbidden. He must ensure all his limbs are fasting. Otherwise, he would be subject to the Prophet's (pbuh) caution that reads:

"There are many people who fast and get nothing but hunger!.." (Ibn Majah, Siyam, 21)

"Whosoever does not stop lying or engaging in dishonest activity should know that Allah does not need him laying off from eating and drinking." (Bukhari, Sawm, 8)

Abdullah ibn Umar (RA) says:

"Even if you become as frail as a bow from praying and as lean as a nail from fasting, Allah will not accept your deeds unless you keep away from the impermissible and the doubtful."

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

"Do not feed your flesh in excess; for it will eventually be sacrificed to earth! Look to fill your heart from the fountains of inspiration. It is the heart that will be honoured and reach lofty heights."

“Give your body only a little of the taste of this world; for those who feed their flesh in excess end up lost in desire.”

“Feed your spirit with spiritual food, mature thinking and wisdom so that it goes where it will go full of strength!”

[T]raits like gluttony, wastefulness, excess, laziness and oversleeping damage a person's spiritual vigour. They pile weight on the heart and make a person unwilling to perform deeds of worship. It is of little wonder that our **Prophet** (pbuh) has encouraged eating less:

“Man fills no vessel worse than his stomach. He only needs a few morsals to keep his back straight. If it cannot be avoided then he should fill a third with food, a third water and a third air!” (Tirmizi, Zuhd, 47)

As fasting is also a dietary discipline that cures physical disease, it is, at the same time, a great means of rejuvenating spiritual health.

A Muslim be concerned about the malnourishment of his spirit, not his flesh. The flesh is nothing more than the spirit's dress; and ultimately, it is bound to return to its origin, the earth. The spirit, on the other hand, will soar to greater heights, depending on its strength. Thus, while taking care to not neglect his physical health, man must be concerned more with his spiritual health and wellbeing.

The episode recounted below beautifully explains just how sensitive wise people were on this matter:

Muhammed ibn Kab Al-Qurazi narrates:

A while ago, I ran into **Umar ibn Abdulaziz** in Medina. Back then, he was a handsome young man and quite wealthy. Years later, I visited him after he became caliph. This time, I could not hide my shock upon seeing him and I stood and stared at his face bewildered.

“Muhammed, why are you looking at me like that?” he asked.

“O commander of the believers”, I replied. “You are pale, your body is tattered and your hair turned grey and fallen out. I just could not hide my surprise seeing you like this.”

Umar ibn Abdulaziz, who looked as though he had crumbled from the weight of carrying the responsibility of Muslims, looked at me and said:

“Who knows, Muhammed, how surprised you will be if you were to see me three days after I am buried in the grave? Ants will have carved out my eyes, which will have dripped down to my cheeks, while my nose and mouth will have been filled with pus. You would not recognize me at all and I you would be in greater shock!

Anyhow, leave that matter aside and tell me, once again, the hadith **Ibn Abbas** narrated from the **Messenger of Allah** ...” (Hakim, IV, 300/7706)

It is clear that Allah’s (JJ) righteous servants wish to save their spirits, not their bodies. What matters on the journey towards eternity is not the body’s strength, health or beauty; it is the closeness of the spirit to the Lord.

And what takes the spirit closer to the Lord is a pure heart and righteous deeds. A hadith states:

“Allah does not look at your appearance or wealth; rather at your hearts and actions!” (Muslim, Birr, 34)

The Almighty has sent us to this world clean; and He wants us to return to His presence with a heart cleansed of the rust and grime of evil actions. We must not forget that the most precious gift we can possibly take to the Almighty’s presence is a heart that is pure and polished like a mirror, reflecting the Lord’s beautiful names.

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Know that financial losses often benefit the spirit and relieve it of responsibility. When giving charity, wealth appears to leave the hand but in reality, it returns to the giver’s heart with a dose of a thousand lives!”

[By making a person undergo a brief period of deprivation, fasting reminds of the value of daily bread and instils empathy for the needy. And in so doing, it opens the springs of mercy, compassion and generosity inside the heart.

So, the first lesson fasting teaches is compassion. It opens up the arteries of the heart blocked by lack of compassion, as only the hungry can understand what a hungry person endures.

During the years of severe famine in Egypt, **Prophet Yusuf** (AS) was asked:

“You are an administrator in charge of the state’s treasury. Why do you starve yourself?”

To this, the great prophet replied:

“I fear that on a full stomach, I will not be able to understand what the people are going through!”

With the feelings of compassion Ramadan instils, we must spread our wings even more generously during this month for the poor and the underprivileged. We should never forget that Allah the Almighty is testing us at every moment to see how we are able to spend what He has given us in His way.

Also, there is a profound secret in giving charity in Allah’s (JJ) way. While it may appear as though the money dwindles, in reality it grows like a tree that has been pruned.

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Wealth does not lessen through charity. Much rather, charity insures wealth against loss!

Gold never decreases by giving alms; on the contrary, it grows. The alms you give becomes a guard that protects your wallet.

The storehouse of a farmer is emptied out during sowing season; but at harvest time, he reaps plenty more than the seeds he had scattered on the land! In return for an emptied storehouse, he receives many storehouses filled to the brim!

Yet, if the wheat is not put to use and kept hidden away in the storehouse, it will only be food for fleas, bugs and mice. And rest assured they will devour it all.”

[Alms, charity and all forms of spending in the way of Allah (JJ) are like spiritual insurances which, depending on the sincerity of the benefactor, protect the wealth from loss. In return for a person's sincere generosity, the Almighty promises rewards from 10 to up to 700 fold.

Our Prophet (pbuh) has said:

“Two angels descend on earth each morning. One of them prays:

‘O Allah! Renew the wealth of he who spends in Your way!’

And the other curses:

‘O Allah! Destroy the wealth of the miser!’” (Muslim, Zakat, 57)

Man is influenced mostly by two things: the character of his friends and the nature of the money he makes.

People believe they hold sway over the money they earn. Yet, more often than not, money has control over people. In other words, the nature of how the money is earned gives direction to a person's character. Money is like a snake; it returns to the same hole from which it exits. So, to see whether the earnings are clean, it suffices to take a look at where they are spent. Clean earnings are expended in the way of good, whereas dirty money always ends up being spent for the bad.

It is therefore a great honour to be able to spend money in the way of Allah (JJ). Not every person is blessed with this opportunity. **Ali** (RA) offers a deep observation regarding the misers deprived of this privilege:

“Misers are strange. They live on earth like they are poor but are called into account in the afterlife like they are rich.”

To sum up, in a month when divine mercy bursts open, we must show even greater care to fulfil our duty of brotherhood by mobilising our physical and financial means for those in need. **Our Prophet** (pbuh), the most benevolent of all people, would, in fact, recognise no barrier during Ramadan to become even more charitable than the sweet winds of mercy and would intensify both his deeds and donation. When he was asked:

“Which charity comes with greater rewards?”, he replied:

“Charity given during the month of Ramadan...” (Tirmizi, Zakat, 28/663)

May the Almighty Allah grant us the foresight to make the most of each night as if it is the Night of Power and take advantage of the endless opportunities for reward the holy month of Ramadan has on offer. Through His eternal grace, may He deliver us to the true Ramadan festival, by taking advantage of this holy month in the most beautiful way possible and receiving His divine pardon at the month's end. May He give us the vigour to tie this year's Ramadan with the next through righteous deeds of sincere intent and to live our entire lives in the spirit of Ramadan and may He turn our abodes in the afterlife into a never-ending celebration.

Amin!...





WORDS OF WISDOM FROM

Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him)



Words of Wisdom From Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him) - 7

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Giving thanks for a blessing is more pleasant than the blessing itself. Would a grateful man ever stop thanking?”

“Gratitude is the blessing’s heart and soul. The blessing is like skin; a shell. It is only gratitude that takes you to the gates of the Friend.”

“A blessing can make you sluggish. Showing thanks, however, always makes you alert.”

“So, come to your senses and hunt the true blessing with the gift of giving thanks!”

[If a friend was to shower us in gifts, we would feel ashamed to wrong him in the slightest. We would meticulously avoid any action that may hurt him. Our hearts would feel naturally inclined to express how grateful and indebted we are.

In this fleeting world, the Almighty grants us countless blessings for us to give thanks, and through these, He tests us to separate the grateful from the ungrateful. He informs us that while the grateful will attain divine mercy, the ungrateful will face the doom of divine wrath.



Giving thanks does not just consist of our tongues saying, ‘Thank you’; we need to fill these words with a gratitude that comes from our heart.

Real gratitude is to anchor in the heart the awareness that the true owner of all blessings is the Allah, Lord of all the worlds.

A gratitude in action is to avoid exploiting these blessings to ends Allah (JJ) is displeased with; and to turn these blessings into a means of attaining divine pleasure, by mobilising them in the way Allah (JJ) desires. Divine pleasure is the greatest blessing anyone could attain. One cannot possibly imagine anything greater.

When listing the distinguishing qualities of believers, the Almighty says:

“You see them bowing and prostrating, seeking Allah’s good favour and His pleasure...” (Al-Fath, 48: 29) In so stating, the Almighty alludes to how obtaining His pleasure needs to be a Muslim’s greatest aim. In light of this, we should ask the Almighty to always reconcile our thoughts and actions with His pleasure.

The fact is that even if the entire world was given to a single person and that person enjoyed an extravagant kingdom of self-indulgence for a thousand years, he would in the end still die and leave everything behind. It is by thanking the Lord and thereby using these fleeting blessings to earn His pleasure that a person will have endless bliss in the eternal kingdom of the Next World.

From this vantage, even the ability to give thanks to Allah (JJ) is an exceptional blessing that requires a thanks in its own right. Simpler put, on top of the innumerable blessings man is graced with, he must also be grateful for the ability to give thanks for them. He must appreciate the fact he can remember the Allah, bow and prostrate to Him, and for having been chosen to be His servant.

In the Qur'an, the Almighty declares:

“We guided him on the Way, whether he is grateful or ungrateful!”
(Al-Insan, 76: 3) In other words, being grateful is for man’s own benefit.

Nothing can be more careless and foolish than being fixated on the blessings and forgetting their Provider, when a far greater opportunity lies in thanking Him and working to obtain His pleasure.

The great **Yunus Emre** calls out to those who allow their worldly means to blind them to their Provider and are fooled by illusions of self-grandeur:

*Owner of riches, owner of wealth
Where has the first owner gone?
Riches are a lie, so is wealth
Mess around a bit until you're done!..*

About those who have become enslaved to the world and tricked by its reveries, the Almighty says:

عَامِلٌ نَّاصِبٌ : “**Labouring, toiling endlessly.**” (Al-Ghashiyah, 88: 3)

Another thing that must be borne in mind is that a blessing that has not been thanked for, stops being a blessing and becomes a burden. Any blessing that man turns into a capital for his ego and exploits for transgression is no longer a blessing, but a spiritual disaster that will amount to misery in the Next World.

What truly benefits man is a blessing for which he gives thanks. A blessing that fuels ungratefulness and rebellion is, in reality, tribulation and an arduous burden. The ignorant become happy, supposing this is good for them. They become sad if deprived of it. This is simply a condition of ultimate ignorance.

The Almighty highlights this folly that affects so many people:

“As for man, when His Lord tests him by honouring him and favouring him, he says ‘My Lord has honoured me!’

But when He tests him by restricting his provision, he says ‘My Lord has humiliated me!’” (Al-Fajr, 89: 15-16)

So, a person must first stop assuming that every provision he is given, is automatically good and rather see them like a double-edged sword, considering them as potential means for both good and evil. He must only celebrate the *halal* provisions for which he is able to give proper thanks. Also,

he must bear in mind that being deprived from something that could potentially drag him into destruction is a blessing in disguise; and, for which he also owes thanks to the Lord.

The Prophet Suleyman (AS) was given a kingdom like no one before or after. Yet, he never forgot that his Lord was the true owner of his kingdom, and subsequently blocked his heart from becoming a safe for the riches of the world. And the Almighty praised him with the words, **يَغْمُ الْعَبْدُ**: **What a beautiful servant...**²⁷

On the other hand there is **Prophet Ayyub (AS)**, who never stopped being patient and content, despite being tested with severe pain, illness and poverty. And the Almighty acclaimed him in the exact same way: **يَغْمُ الْعَبْدُ**: **What a beautiful servant...**²⁸

This means that insofar as earning Allah's (JJ) pleasure and love are concerned, the thankful rich and the patient poor stand on the same apex of virtue.

For that reason, remaining thankful during life's ebbs and flows must be the unchanging characteristic of every Muslim.

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“The attribute of Divine Generosity manifests itself in the the poor. These poor seek help from the benevolent people. They open up their needs to them. By doing so, they open up the paths of bliss for the charitable rich.”

“Just as the poor stand in need of generosity and goodwill, generosity and goodwill stand in need of the poor. Beauties look for shiny mirrors, free of rust and dust, so that they can stare at their own faces. Generosity looks for the weak just as ardently.

“The poor are mirrors for the generous. Do not fog the mirror up by saying hurtful things to it!”

27. Sad, 30.

28. Sad, 44.

[The best way of expressing our gratitude to Allah (JJ) is to donate what He has given us to win His pleasure and the true glory and joy of wealth is the ability to protect the ego from being stingy and wasteful, and using it to make the poor and needy happy by donating it in the way of Allah (JJ). A true Muslim is selfless and generous; and he lives for the joy of making the poor happy. A peace of heart can only be found in handing out happiness to the Almighty's needy servants.

While the poor may need the wealthy in this life, the rich need the prayers of the poor even more in the afterlife. From this angle, the poor are priceless blessings for the rich. It is only through the poor that the rich obtain the chance to win Allah's (JJ) pleasure.

Truly conscious of this fact were our elders, who would place their donations in nice envelopes on which they would write kind words such as '*Thank you for accepting this*'.

Like all things else, charity also comes with its own etiquette. While a donation offered with propriety and kindness elevates a person to the peak of virtue, a donation that carries traces of arrogance, given in a rude manner that hurts the feelings of the poor, ends up annihilating every grain of virtue it would have otherwise had.

The Qur'an, states clearly:

“Correct and courteous words accompanied by forgiveness are better than charity followed by insulting words.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 263)

“So as for the orphan, do not oppress him, and as for beggars, do not berate them.” (Al-Duha, 93: 9-10)

Our Prophet (pbuh) was never at peace until he donated what came his way, to the poor and if he had nothing to give, he would turn his head the other way in embarrassment. It was then that the Almighty revealed the following:

“But if you do turn away from them, seeking the mercy and hope from your Lord, then speak to them with words that bring them ease.”
(Al-Isra, 17: 28)

It is clear that refusing the poor and turning them away without giving them a solution, has no place in Islam. If a Muslim has absolutely nothing to give, then he must at least try and console the poor with a few kind words.

Hearts are the focal point of the Lord's gaze. The Almighty is right by the side of the broken-hearted. We must, therefore, be extremely kind and polite to the wounded and the distressed.

Also, we must never forget that no balm can ever heal a wound hurtful words have slashed open in a grieving heart. Once a glass is broken, no matter how strongly it is glued back together, it will always carry the scars and will never be the same...]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Son! Death assumes the person’s colour. To those who hate death and act as its enemies without thinking it is the reunion with the Lord, death appears as a nemesis. For those who befriend death, it appears as a friend.”

“You who fear death and run away from it, if you want to hear the truth of the matter, you do not fear death; you fear your own sins and neglect.”

“What you fear when you stare at the mirror of death, is not the face of death but your own vile face. If your soul is a tree, death is a leaf. Know that each leaf forms according to the species of the tree...”

[The Qur'an states:

“Yes, the friends of Allah will feel no fear and will know no sorrow: those who believe and show taqwa.” (Yunus, 10: 62-63)

Just as true Muslims who believe in Allah (JJ) and lead righteous lives will face no fear in the grave and in the afterlife, they will equally be fearless at the moment they bid farewell to earth. Each person will pass the gates of death that open to the eternal realm in line with their true spiritual condition. For some, it will be easy; while for others, it will be gruelling.

A hadith, in fact, says:

“When death draws near and the time comes for a Muslim to leave the earth, the Angel of Death arrives and sits by his bedside. Other angels descend from the skies, with faces as bright as the sun. They bring with them the shrouds and scents of paradise. They sit right across the person, directly at where he is staring. The Angel of Death says:

‘O you spirit, who has now found peace! Exit now to unite with your Lord’s forgiveness and pleasure!’

And the spirit trickles out with as much ease as a drop of water out of a cup.

As for the wrongdoer, when death draws near and the time comes for him to leave earth, the Angel of Death arrives and sits by his bedside. Other angels descend from the heavens, with faces pitch black and carrying coarse clothes made of bristle. They sit right across the person, directly at where he is staring. The Angel of Death says:

‘You dirty spirit! Exit to meet Allah’s anger and wrath!’

The spirit then leaves the body with as much difficulty as a hooked skewer pulled out of wet wool. It is like every vein and nerve is ripped out piece by piece.” (See, Hakim, Mustadrak, I, 93-95/107)²⁹

For deniers and wrongdoers who have wasted their lives being slaves to their egos and playthings of the devil, death will mark the nightmarish start of a journey to eternal punishment, and the grave will greet them in the form of a fire pit from hell.

Believers, on the other hand, who have overcome their egos by obeying Allah’s (JJ) commands, will breathe their final breaths blissfully and with an eagerness for that long-awaited reunion, while their graves will welcome them like a garden of Eden.

Death, for righteous servants, is a necessary gateway to reunite with their Lord, whose beauty and perfection is beyond all imagination. Hence, while death may give a lot of people the chills, the righteous see it as an exciting prospect to reunite with ‘The Greatest Friend’.

29. Compare with Ahmed, IV, 287, 295; Haythami, III, 50-51.

Our Prophet (pbuh) had once explained:

“Whoever wants to reunite with Allah, Allah also wants to reunite with him. Whoever dislikes reuniting with Allah, Allah also dislikes reuniting with him!”

A wife of the Prophet (pbuh) then asked:

“Allah’s Messenger! But none of us like the idea of death; it evokes a bad image in all of us!”

The Prophet (pbuh) then said:

“That was not what I meant. Yet, when death comes to a believer, he is given the good news of Allah’s pleasure, generosity and endless blessings. After that point, he wants nothing more than to reach what he is promised. For that reason, he loves and wishes to reunite with Allah and Allah wishes to reunite with him.

As for the disbeliever, when death comes, he is given the bad news of Allah’s anger and punishment. From that point on, nothing for him is uglier than meeting that penalty. For that reason, he detests reuniting with Allah; and Allah detests reuniting with him!” (Bukhari, Riqaq, 41; Muslim, Dhikr, 14)

At their moment of death, servants who have gained divine love on earth by believing and committing to righteous deeds, will be given the wonderful news of Allah’s (JJ) pleasure. They will therefore peacefully glide through the passage of death, wholeheartedly wishing to meet the Lord as soon as possible.

The Umayyad caliph **Sulayman ibn Abd al-Malik** once asked the righteous scholar **Abu Hazim**:

“How will the journey to Allah be?”

Abu Hazim replied:

“The journey of a righteous servant to Allah will be like that of a person who comes home to his waiting family after spending some time away. The journey of a rebel, however, will be like that of a slave who is forced to return to his owner after being caught!”

So, for a person who has spent his life worried about whether he will be able to die as a Muslim and taken great strides to prepare for the afterlife, death marks the joy of a homecoming after exile. As for those who have lived unresponsive to their reason for existence and wasted their days pursuing their desires without once reflecting on whose property they have revelled in or the grave they will end up in, death will come crashing down like a terrible disaster.

Wahb ibn Munabbih voices this truth in a story:

A king was about to go on a journey; so he wore his best clothes from his wardrobe and picked the finest horse from his stable. With his entourage by his side, he then set out on the road in full glory and splendour. On the way, a man in ragged clothes seized the reins of his horse. The king angrily yelled:

“Who are you to cut me off. Step aside!”

The man calmly said:

“I have something to tell you. It is a matter of life and death!”

With a voice mixed with fury and curiosity, the king said:

“Go ahead and tell me!”

“It is top secret”, said the man. “You need to lean down so I can whisper in your ear!”

The king leaned down, only to hear the man utter:

“I am the Angel of Death. I have come to take your life!”

Suddenly, the king was overcome with shock and fear, as he began to plea:

“I beg you; give me some more time!”

“No”, replied the Angel of Death. “You have no more time; nor will you be able to go back to your family!” And there and then, he took the king’s life.

Later, the Angel of Death went on his way and came across a righteous Muslim. After greeting him, he said:

“I have some business with you but I can only tell you in secret”. He then leaned forward and revealed his true identity. The man could not hide his joy, as he said:

“Well, then welcome! I have been waiting for you for such a long time...”

The angel of death then said:

“In that case, complete what you are doing!” The man replied:

“What could be more important than reuniting with Allah?”

The angel then said, “Let me take your life on your terms!”

“Is that possible?” asked the man.

“Yes”, replied the angel. “This is what I have been commanded with!”

“In that case”, said the man, “let me take my ablution and start praying. Take my life as I place my forehead on the ground to prostrate!”

And this was the way he died.³⁰

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) and like lovers of Allah (JJ), who prepared for their final breaths and turned their deaths into a beautiful event, perceived death not as a sad separation but a happy wedding night for that eternal reunion.]

May our Lord transform us into fortunate people who are able to make it to His presence properly prepared for death, the grave and the afterlife; and with a perfect faith, a clean heart and a bright face.

Amin!...



30. Ghazzali, *Ihya*, v. 4, p. 834-835, Bedir Publications, Istanbul, 1975.



WORDS OF WISDOM FROM

Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him)



Words of Wisdom From Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him) - 8

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“You ignorant soul who has made a habit of not obeying the Almighty’s commands in your affairs, know that even the particles in your body are subject to Allah’s will. Right now, they are being twofaced and pretending as though you are in command. But if Allah wanted them to rebel, each will turn into your archenemy.

If Allah orders the eye to ‘...cause this servant of mine trouble’, the pain in your eye will take a thousand revenges on you.

If Allah makes your tooth punish you, the tooth will make you twist your ear in agony, and bring you to ruin.

Open the book of medicine and read the chapter on diseases. Read so you see what the soldiers in your body are capable of.

If the life within every life is Allah, does it then make any sense to behave like an enemy to the life within your own? Is this not a form of madness?”

[Man is a weak creature who has little control even over his own body. When deluded by his ego,



however, he presumes he has enough might and power to object even to the commands of Allah (JJ), His Creator.

Yet, if he was to truly take note of the miraculous strokes of divine art in his own body, a person who rebels against his All-Knowing, Powerful and Wise Lord would instantly realise how stupid his rebellion is. To keep living, the human being needs the Lord at every moment. Almost all the actions of our bodily organs take place beyond our control. This includes our heartbeats, breaths and all of the movement within our cells, as well as the mutual assistance and communication that occurs between them.

Billions of biochemical actions take place inside tiny sections of the countless factories inside our bodies; and they function in a magnificent order without our knowledge. As just one manifestation of His infinite knowledge and wisdom, our Lord has created man from a single drop, immaculately programmed him and then left his body on autopilot mode, willing for it to function in harmony. At the bottom of it all, each cell in our bodies fulfils its duty through the command and power of our Lord.

Who knows how many errors we would make, if we were given the command over our bodily functions just for one hour? This should make us realise how much we need our Lord; and how necessary it is for us to obey and submit to Him.

In the Qur'an, the Almighty asks:

“O man! what has deluded you in respect to your Noble Lord? He Who created you and formed you and proportioned you and assembled you in whatever way He willed?” (Al-Infatir, 82: 6-8)

So, to live up to the status of being the best of all creation, man must:

- ✓ Understand that he is absolutely nothing in the face of divine power.
- ✓ Know his limits by keeping in mind that just as he came into existence through the Almighty's command 'be', he will also cease with the command 'die'.

- ✓ Take a lesson from the fact that, if the Lord commands, the tiniest bacteria, invisible to the naked eye, can pack enough might to knock out giants among men.
- ✓ Praise, thank and remember the Almighty; repent and seek refuge in Him with the humility and reverence of a person truly aware that he is nothing.

It is not just the particles in the human body that meticulously abide by the divine order, but also entire creation. How absurd then is it for man, the best of all creation, to turn a blind eye to this reality and think he can carry on against the tide!

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Trouble caused by lack of belief deserves pity, for it has no cure.”

[No trouble is more pitiable than being deprived of belief. Even if man had absolutely no wealth in the world, this is only for a limited time. Having no belief, on the other hand, is cause for eternal poverty.

Even if a nonbeliever was given everything the world has to offer and consequently reigned like a king on earth for a thousand years, the bottom line is that he would still die and leave earth emptyhanded.

Remember that the sun above is the same sun that once shined upon the palaces and treasures of the Pharaohs, the Hamans, the Nimrods, the Hulagu Khans, the tribes of Aad and Thamud; only to rise once again upon their ruins. Neither the skies nor eyes nor hearts cried after these tyrants who boasted about their finite glory and rebelled against Allah (JJ). Much rather, as a result of the curses of people they mercilessly oppressed, they now rot in the scrapyard of history. Their palaces are now occupied by owls and stray dogs.

Regardless of how lavishly he may have lived, a person unable to make the journey into the afterlife with Islam and righteous deeds is miserably bankrupt. In contrast, a person with belief in Allah really has everything, even if he does not have a cent. What belief and righteous deeds bring is an eternal kingdom.

As our Prophet (pbuh) has said:

“The true life is the afterlife.” (Bukhari, Jihad 33, Salat 48, Riqaq, 1)

A believer knows that earth is merely a short stopover on an eternal journey; and that the poverty and troubles experienced here are nothing compared to the punishment of the Next World. Likewise, the pleasures of earth are nothing compared to the endless bliss that awaits in paradise. Therefore, even if he is enduring severe hardship, a Muslim must never be depressed by the sight of nonbelievers indulging in riches and luxury. True to the Qur'an's words, “...**do not be despondent, Allah is with us...**” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 40), the zest of being with Allah (JJ) should make him forget all passing pains.

And in line with the verse, “**Do not give up and do not be downhearted. You shall be uppermost if you are believers.**” (Al-i Imran, 3: 139), he must find solace in the joy of being a believer.

The below prayer of the great Sufi **Ibn Ata'ullah al-Iskandari** is a wonderful example of the peace true faith bestows upon the heart:

“My Lord? What has a person lost after having found You? And what has he found after having lost You?”

In short, a firm belief is the cure for all troubles. No trouble should ever drag a heart that has tasted the sweetness and bliss of Islam, into crisis and depression. Recall that it was prophets, saints and the righteous servants, who suffered the greatest hardships; yet, out of all people, it was them who were the happiest.

This joy also enabled the Prophet's companions to take no notice of any anguish or misfortune. To spread the light of guidance to other hearts, they tirelessly ran from one corner of the earth to another. The power of the belief in their hearts made them leave behind all their worldly fears, concerns and desires.

In the 100th verse of Chapter At-Tawbah, the Almighty presents the Muhajir and the Ansar as a model generation; and praises those who follow in their footsteps. Thus, righteous Muslims who follow the trail of this exemplary generation, live with peaceful hearts, knowing that the trials and

tribulations they experience on earth either atone for their sins or elevate their spiritual ranks.

A hadith says:

“A believer is really worthy of envy and admiration; for every situation is to his advantage. Only believers carry this trait. If a believer is happy, he gives thanks; and this is for his good. If he undergoes a trouble, he is patient; and this is also for his good.” (Muslim, Zuhd, 64)

A believer is thus a person who benefits spiritually from every trial the world presents. Material losses that send the people of the world into despair are, for Muslims, a means of eternal profit that merit patience and even gratitude.

Because they lack this spiritual horizon, hearts deprived of belief in Allah (JJ) and the Next World begin moaning, wailing and rebelling at the sight of the smallest misfortune. It is for this reason that the most pitiable kind of deprivation is to be deprived of a magnificent source of peace and solace that is belief.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Being a candle is not easy. To give light, you first have to burn.”

[For the human being to become mature his heart must first ripen and the heart ripens through abandoning what the ego likes, and undergoing trials in things it dislikes.

The famous poet and intellectual Muhammed Iqbal expresses this through an allegory:

“One night in my library, I heard a moth tell a butterfly:

‘I lodged inside the books of Ibn Sina. I gnawed the pages of Farabi; but try as I may, I could not understand the philosophy of life. And I do not have a sun that could brighten my day...’

The butterfly responded to the call of the moth in such a subtle and beautiful way that you would not come across this in any book:

'Look', it said to the moth. 'I burnt my wings for this love. What makes life even livelier is to flutter with love; and what gives life wings, is to burn in the flames of love!'

Hence, it is impossible to be enlightened and enlighten others without burning. All saints are sublime souls that have ripened by burning in the fire of the truth.

Every saint carries visible scars of this burn. Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him), who carried an eternal fire of divine love in his heart, explains the three stages of his life as:

"I was raw, I became cooked and then I was burnt!.."

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) uses the term '**raw**' to refer to his condition when he was the head professor of Islamic sciences at the Saljuk Madrasa; '**cooked**' to describe his state when he began to unravel the mysteries dotted across the universe after receiving manifestations of divine wisdom, and finally '**burnt**' to depict what he had become after being annihilated in divine love.

In his famous *Water Eulogy*, the poet **Fuzuli** gives voice to the wail of a heart scorched by the love of the Prophet (pbuh), when he writes:

*Do not, my eyes, scatter tears on the fire of my heart that is raging
for water is never a cure for flames ever so blistering*

A similar fire of the Prophet's (pbuh) love had also engulfed **Asad Arbili**, to the point he could no longer look at something without seeing its flames:

*Your beauty, my love, has set spring on fire
The rose, the nightingale, the hyacinth and even the ember*

The same fire can be found in the poetry of **Yaman Dede**, a former Christian who became Muslim after a spark of the Prophet's (pbuh) love set alight the ocean of affection inside his heart and his touching lines carry so much emotion:

*Death from thirst on burning sands would give me no pain
Oceans cannot make me shiver, the volcano within keeps me warm
I would feel nothing if the skies were to hail flames
This is a fire, my Prophet, only your beauty can douse*

Like **Prophet Ibrahim** (AS), all great figures have been thrown into the flames of trouble to mature their spirits and draw closer to the Lord. And in turn, the Almighty has made those flames cool and calm for them, making the flames of divine love on earth extinguish the flames of His wrath in the Next World.

What saves a Muslim from the rawness of his ego and elevates him to spiritual peaks, are:

- ✓ Nurturing a love for Allah (JJ) that allows perceiving pain as pleasure, troubles as mercy and burdens as blessings.
- ✓ Facing trials with patience, neglect with remembrance, ungratefulness with gratitude, rebellion with obedience, stinginess with generosity, selfishness with selflessness, doubt with certainty, hypocrisy with sincerity, arrogance with humility, sins with repentance and ignorance with knowledge.
- ✓ Receiving hardships with a smile; knowing that they are opportunities from the Lord for the erasing of sins and for spiritual elevation.

Just as a raw fruit needs sunlight to ripen, troubles are needed to rid the heart of its rawness and give it maturity.

We sometimes see rocks on the shore that, for centuries, have been relentlessly beaten by crashing waves, removed of their jagged edges and smoothened out to become as hard as granite. They are now almost unbreakable.

Likewise, hearts ripened spiritually by divine tests gain an exceptional resilience. After that point, they neither break nor are broken; in other words, neither do they hurt other hearts nor are they ever hurt themselves. The first lesson of a Sufi is not to break hearts, while the last is not to let the heart be broken...]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“A fool splits hairs to pry into others’ lives, finds their faults and spreads the word. Yet, his stupidity blinds him to his own faults.”

[A believer must worry about his own shortcomings, not those of his fellow Muslims. He must know that criticising others will never help him deal with his own mistakes. Pointing the finger at the mistakes of others while snubbing one’s own, is a terrible mistake.

A Muslim who focuses on his own faults has no energy to worry about the faults of others.

The heart of a Muslim that beats to the principle, “*Call yourself into account before you are called into account*”, also shudders at the thought that:

“Whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it. Whoever does an atom’s weight of bad will see it.” (Al-Zilzal, 99: 7-8) And this will give him enough concern to worry about his own mistakes.

Upon hearing that verse from **the Prophet** (pbuh), an astonished bedouin asked:

“A atom’s weight, Allah’s Messenger?”

“Yes”, he replied.

The man’s expression instantly changed, as he began to bemoan:

“Woe to my faults!...” After repeating these words a few times, he recited the verse he had just heard, and then left the scene.

After he left, the Prophet (pbuh) said:

“Belief has truly entered the heart of that bedouin.” (Suyuti, *al-Durrul-Mansur*, VIII, 595)

A sign of true belief is to be concerned with the ultimate day when even the slightest and seemingly insignificant errors will find their place on the divine scale. Conversely, forgetting all this to snoop into the faults of others displays a weakness in belief.

By commanding us to “**Avoid most suspicion!**” (Al-Hujurat, 49: 12), the Almighty informs us that investigating and exposing the personal sins of others, can even a greater sin than those sins themselves.

The great sufi **Abdullah Dahlawi** would always interrupt the conversation, when he heard people next to him speak ill about others. He would say:

“I am worthier of the words you use for him!”

By doing so, he would not only obstruct people around him from gossiping, but would also point to the need to ignore the personal faults of others and concentrate on one’s own.

On the other hand, we must always remember that behind every external event lies an inner cause. The Qur'an, in fact, states:

“Corruption has appeared in both land and sea because of what people’s own hands have brought about.” (Al-Rum, 30: 41)

So, we must look back on every experience we go through and ask:

✓ Do we have any personal faults to blame for the physical and spiritual disasters we experience? What kind of a spiritual level do we need to reach for the peace and comfort of our society?

✓ Are we able to properly live up to the standards required of a true Muslim? How much of our actions and behaviour suggests we are model Muslims?

✓ How positive or negative are the effects we leave on hearts? Do our words and actions really serve as keys to goodness and locks against evil? How much are we really able to encourage people to do good and discourage them from evil?

✓ How liable do we really feel about the direction society is taking? Or, God-forbid, have we subscribed to the philosophy “let anyone do whatever evil they like as long as they do not harm me personally”?

✓ Are we able to always side with justice even if it appears against our personal interests? Or do we compromise justice for worldly gains?

- ✓ How much do we listen to our conscience in its daily war with our wallets? When faced with a choice between this life and the afterlife, how passionately do we proclaim that ‘the true life lies in the next’?
- ✓ Are we able to review our conditions in full honesty? Or do our reviews stand in need of another review?

In short, our duty as Muslims is to “**reserve criticism to ourselves and tolerate to others**”. Instead of losing time critiquing other people, we need to seriously reflect on our own condition. We must think about how even our smallest faults will be weighed on the divine scale, and, from now onward, strive to make amends with genuine remorse and righteous deeds.

Through his eternal generosity and favour, may Allah the Almighty include us among the righteous servants He loves and whose sincerity He protects.

Amin!...





WORDS OF WISDOM FROM

Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him)



Words of Wisdom From Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him) - 9

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“When you see the river, tip the bowl of water into it. Have you ever seen water flee the river?”

“Once the water inside the bowl mixes with the river, it is freed of its own existence becomes one with the river.”

“It loses its qualities and attributes, and retains its essence. After that, it shall neither decrease, nor smell nor become foul.”

[Commentators of the *Mathnawi* note that the river in the above allegory symbolises the infinite afterlife, while the water inside the bowl represents man's mortal existence. Man pours the bowl of water that is his life into the river of eternity to comply with the command of “*dying before death*”. It also points to how man must be as if he is dead to the temptation of evil actions and thereby defeat egoistic desires and ambitions before death inescapably arrives, as well as the need to rely on the Almighty and thereby transform the fleeting provisions on earth into capital for an everlasting joy.

Life is indeed like a fast-flowing river. It is but a limited asset placed in our hands. While the ig-



norant imagine this asset to be endless, it is spectacularly short when compared to the eternal Next World. The Qur'an throws light on how a time will come when man will realise with this with an unshakable certainty:

“On the Day they see it, it will be as if they had only lingered for the evening or the morning of a single day.” (Al-Naziat, 79: 46)

A hadith says:

“This world compared to the Next World, is like one of you dipping your finger in a sea. And this life is however much water the finger can draw.” (Hakim, Mustadrak, 4/319)

Like all gifts, the gift of life is a blessing from Allah (JJ). It is the only capital man has to obtain eternal bliss. Therefore, the most profitable trade he can engage in on earth is to barter the mortal for the immortal, and the drop for the ocean. Besides, the drop originates from the ocean; and it is where it belongs. Returning it to the ocean could hardly be considered a sacrifice, as every drop, willingly or not, will one day make its way back there.

In the words of the Qur'an:

إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

“We belong to Allah and to Him we will return!” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 156)

And the words “*Our Lord, we have come from You and to You we will return*”, which wise people utter at every occasion, reflects the sentiments of hearts immersed in this divine reality.

The greatest skill, therefore, lies in the generosity to pour the water of life into the ocean of eternity. This is the key to ‘dying before death’. In the words of Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him):

“How lucky one is to have died before death and whose spirit has breathed the scent of the garden of truth.”

From another vantage, that **bowl of water** represents the power, rank and careers upon which man depends on earth. Divine sovereignty, on the other hand, is an infinite power and glory beyond all imagination; and it

incorporates the entire universe within which the earth is a mere speck of dust.

Again, that **bowl of water** is all the knowledge man can possibly attain. Divine knowledge, on the other hand, is a shoreless ocean, as the below hadith wonderfully illustrates:

“During that incredible journey where Khidr (AS) held Musa (AS) witness to many wonderful and mysterious incidents, a sparrow landed on the deck of a ship they had boarded and began to collect some water from the sea with its beak. Khidr (AS) drew Musa’ (AS) attention to it and remarked:

‘What you, I and entire creation know is a drop compared to the sea of Allah’s knowledge.’ (Al-Bukhari, Tafsir, 18/4)

The **bowl of water** is also the wealth and assets the Almighty has entrusted in man for the purpose of trial. The Almighty’s wealth and kingdom, in contrast, is endless. As the Qur'an reminds:

“The kingdom of the heavens and earth belongs to Allah. Allah has power over all things.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 189)

“If you tried to number Allah’s blessings, you could never count them. Man is indeed wrongdoing, ungrateful!” (Ibrahim, 14: 34)

What the entire creation has eaten or drunk since the beginning of time, has not decreased the Allah’s treasures in the tiniest bit.

In short, the **bowl of water** man clings onto is all the favours, blessings and opportunities the Almighty has given him. As for the river of life, it continues to flow towards the eternal ocean. Man will become one with that eternal ocean only to the extent he can willingly pour his life, wealth, knowledge, wisdom and possibilities into the river. And only then will he understand the secret of becoming annihilated in Allah (J) (*fana fillah*).]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Would a toddler ever drop the smelly onion in his hand before seeing the apple?”

[Children at a learning stage take pleasure from small and simple toys. As their body develops, so does their mental and spiritual aptitudes. Simple toys fall out of favour; and it would be considered quite strange seeing an adolescent playing with those same small toys.

Similarly, the Almighty wants human beings to become mature and draw away from the simple pleasures of the world towards the real and eternal joy of the afterlife. Such is the reason the Qur'an states:

"The life of this world is nothing but a game and a diversion. The abode of the Next World - that is truly Life if only they knew!" (Al-Ankabut, 29: 64)

For immature souls, this world appears as a deceitful mirage that looks like water. It is like a toffee apple children want to grab. But regardless of how colourful it may seem, its inside is sour and rotten.

In the sight of Allah (JJ), the world is not even worth the wing of a fly. The Lord, therefore, does not value people who ignore the Next World and set their sights on a world He deems worthless. A portion of Allah's (JJ) pleasure and the smallest blessing of heaven is infinitely more precious than the entire earth.

The intellect of a man who delves into the pleasures of the world is no different than that of a toddler who thinks the tastiest food of all is the smelly onion in his hand, only because he has not been exposed to delicious food and therefore does not know any better. In the words below, Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) warns those who turn their backs on the magnificent gifts and the eternal joy waiting for them in the afterlife, and lend their hearts instead to the passing glitters of the world:

"Man has sold himself cheap. He was like a precious satin fabric but went and patched himself on a cardigan."

Instead of turning his direction to the Lord who promises glorious gifts such as paradise and the privilege of gazing at His beauty, it is utterly stupid for man to make do with fleeting pleasures of the flesh and, confusing his misery for joy, waste his eternity on a life that is bound to end in the grave.

Malik ibn Dinar recounts:

“I once asked **Hasan Basri**:

‘What is the worst thing in the world?’

‘The death of the heart’, he answered.

‘How does the heart die?’ I asked.

‘From loving the world’, he replied.”

Another saint offers similar words of wisdom:

“Lovers of religion have not left the world. But lovers of the world have left religion.”

In other words, being righteous does not mean withdrawing from the world altogether. Much rather, as was the case with **Prophet Sulayman** (AS), true piety is to keep the world outside the heart. It is the attitude of not being bound to the world, while searching for one’s portion of it. It is hard for a heart smitten by the world to find the strength to understand the divine truths and enjoy offering deeds of worship. To protect ourselves from the disease of materialism, we must therefore dip our hearts in abstinence and piety.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“The sea does not become dirty just because it has been touched by the mouth of a dog.”

[A person who attacks religious values or insults prophets and saints, can take nothing away from their highness and honour. His negative attitude only increases his disgrace and adds more fuel to his punishment.

Against these harassers, Muslims must nonetheless adopt an attitude compliant with the principle of ‘hating for the sake of Allah (JJ)’. Situations like these also test Muslims on how much they are able to protect Islam’s honour and dignity.

The real belief entails **love for those deserve it** and **hate for those worthy of it**. Simpler put, it requires a love of Allah (JJ) and those He loves, and a loathing of the enemies of Allah (JJ) and His Messenger (pbuh). The most vivid example of this teaching can be found in the Qur'an's chapter Al-Masad.

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“You poor soul who has weakened his faith for a loaf of bread and sold his treasure for a grain of barley! Nimrod could not lend his heart to Ibrahim but ended up surrendering his life to a mosquito.”

[How miserable a deception it is to sell one's eternal happiness for just a piece of the world. Scholar Abu Hazim says:

“Any means (wealth, positions) that does not take one closer to Allah is nothing but disaster.”

One of the friends of Allah, **Jafar Sadiq** says similar words:

“The Almighty Allah says to the world, ‘Serve those who serve Me! Tire and wear down those who serve you!’”

The miser who cannot break the chains of his heart and bring himself to donate, the lazy too unwilling to sacrifice his comfort to comply with divine commands and the ignorant too meek against his ego to serve in the way of Allah (JJ), may one day find themselves having to squander their precious lives and wealth for much simpler and mundane reasons. Those who lack the courage to dive into the ocean of troubles for the love of Allah (JJ), may end up drowning in a small pond.

The proud **Nimrod** had followed his ego to sternly reject obeying Allah (JJ); and letting his arrogance get the better of him, he even claimed to be god. But when his time came, he was helpless against the flimsiest of mosquitos and could do nothing to ward off divine anger coming his way.

The pompous army of **Abraha**, which had marched from Sanaa with the aim of demolishing the Kaba, was mauled like grass grazed by cattle at the outskirts of Mecca not by lions, tigers or wild predators from the desert, but by stone-pelting little birds, as if to mock their self-acclaimed grandeur.

Like the tragic end of every arrogant tyrant, when the winds of death ultimately blew away their harvests of life, neither did the earth mourn for them, nor did the afterlife welcome them with a smile. The bitter ends of these tyrants now only serve as historical examples of the disgrace that befalls arrogant fools.

Real joy and sovereignty lies in grasping one's vulnerability and nothingness before the Almighty and willingly making sacrifices while there is still a chance. A hadith, in fact, reminds us that:

"An intelligent person controls his self and works for the afterlife by calling himself to account. The fool expects mercy from Allah despite letting his desires dominate" (Tirmizi, Qiyamah, 25/2459)

We must remember that real peace and comfort lies in restraining the self and quitting the pursuit of its never-ending desires. Better still, we need to ride the self like a horse and make it relentlessly gallop on the road of reunion with the Lord until our final breaths.

Imam Ghazali puts it beautifully:

"The self is the spirit's mount. If man lets go of its reins and allows it to run free, he is predestined for destruction. So, hold on tight to the reins of yourself and look to make the most of your ride! (It is only through your body, by saddling the self, that you can serve the Lord.)"

The spirit of a Muslim triumphant in purifying the self is always strong, healthy and peaceful.

It was, in fact, the prophets, companions, saints and righteous Muslims who passed the crucibles of the greatest trials and tribulations. Yet, despite the physical troubles they endured, they also enjoyed an ineffable peace of heart, mind and conscience.

Thus, the secret to peace and happiness lies not in trying to quench what is an unquenchable ego; but training it to let go of its greed.

Yusuf Has Hajib offers deep words of wisdom in his *Kutadgu Bilig*:

"You who know so much, do not fall prisoner to your own ego! For when it imprisons you, it will ask for your religion as ransom!...]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

"Hunger is the king of all medicine. Embrace hunger with all your heart; do not disdain it! Many an illness is cured by hunger. Even good food has no appeal unless you are hungry!"

A man was once eating stale bread with a great appetite. Another man asked:

'Why do have so much appetite for a stale bread?' The man replied:

'At the end of my patience, my hunger has increased twofold; and even this stale bread seems like dessert! And if I keep patient, I will enjoy a dessert every time I eat!'''

[While hunger mellows the heart and gives it lightness, an overly full stomach burdens and darkens it. Hunger curbs the transgressions of the ego and makes it easier to turn to the good. A full stomach, on the other hand, blinds the senses, constricts the spirit and blocks the arteries of wisdom.

Shaykh Shibli confirms this, when he says:

"Every time I am hungry, I find that a door of wisdom has opened in my heart."

Abu Sulayman Darani also observes:

"Every object has its rust. The rust of the heart is excess eating. Whoever eats too much is confronted by six problems:

- 1) *He no longer enjoys ritual prayer.*
- 2) *He becomes forgetful.*
- 3) *He loses compassion; as he thinks everyone is on a full stomach, just because he is.*
- 4) *He becomes lazy in fulfilling deeds of worship and other righteous acts.*
- 5) *His becomes overcome with lust.*
- 6) *When the rest of Muslims head to the mosque, he heads to the toilet."*

So, for both physical and spiritual peace, one must avoid overfeeding the body. This is especially important considering that in our times, many people who enjoy comfortable lives nonetheless suffer from physical and spiritual illnesses, as well as unease, discontent and frustration. One of the prime causes of these conditions is excess eating. Its remedy lies not only in

avoiding foods that are prohibited and doubtful, but also consuming permissible foods in a limited measure.

A content person who has outmuscled his ego finds that even a few morsels of wholesome food are enough to satisfy his appetite and give him peace. On the opposite end, a person entirely foreign to the sensation of hunger cannot appreciate the taste of any food, no matter how delicious. Wealthy people looking for a peace of heart must therefore look out for and protect the poor. They must also frequent scenes of mourning and draw lessons from situations of poverty. Otherwise, they cannot protect their hearts from contracting the disease of mercilessness.

Shaykh Sadi Shirazi shares a valuable memory that stresses the need for a Muslim to have a sensitive heart:

A wealthy friend of the shaykh had shown up at a time when a severe famine had devastated Damascus and its people. Prior to the famine, the man was strong and bulky; and the shaykh was surprised to see that he had turned pale and slender. The shaykh asked him why; and the man, saddened by the question, replied:

“My friend! If you do not know the reason of my grief, that is an ignorance on your part! And if you do know, why do you ask? Do you not see that this devastation has reached fever pitch?”

Shaykh Sadi said:

“I do know! But why are you so sad and gaunt? You have everything you need!” This time, his wise friend says:

“Could a man on the beach be at peace watching his brothers and sisters drown? My face has turned pale because of the pain that has struck the Muslims. The more I see their pain, the more I lose my appetite. I feel like the food gets stuck in my throat and I am swallowing poison. How can a person have a good time seeing the destitution of fellow human beings? Every time I see one of them cry, my eyes also well up...”

We need to take a good hard look at ourselves and assess how much our hearts really feel for our persecuted Muslim brothers and sisters across the world, which today are ablaze with oppression. This is not only an ob-

ligation of brotherhood, but also something we will be questioned about in the Next World.

We should remember that on the day of judgment when there will be no shade, one of the seven groups of people to be shaded under the Throne, will be brothers of religion who love each other for the sake of Allah (JJ).³¹ Doing justice to this brotherhood hinges on making sacrifices during hard times, like the times we have now. So, the prayers and donations we make for our oppressed brethren of Islam will act as the most beautiful expressions of gratitude to our Lord.]

May the Almighty turn us all into generous, selfless and righteous servants who take the troubles of fellow Muslims to heart; and from whose hands, tongue and heart all Muslims benefit.

Amin...!



31. See, Bukhari, Riqaq, 24.



WORDS OF WISDOM FROM

Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him)



10

Words of Wisdom From Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him) - 10

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“The day of judgment is a terrible eid of sacrifice for mottled cows – the evil disbelievers and wrongdoers. It is a day of death for the cattle, but a festival for believers!”

[To greet death with a festive joy, a person must sacrifice his life and wealth for the Almighty in this world. As for the ignorant too lazy to comply with divine commands and too weak to slaughter an ego that constantly runs to desire, they will find that the day of judgment will be a terrible day of slaughter.

Death assumes the same colour as one's life. It will be a festive joy for some, while a nightmarish journey towards punishment for others.

To turn our afterlives into an eternal festival, we must strive to live with joyful servanthood. The true festival, or *eid*, is the day we appear in the presence of the Almighty, having successfully passed the trial of life on earth. The friends of Allah have, in fact, said:



“The true festival is not the day you wear new clothes, but the day you are forever safe from Allah’s punishment.”

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“The moon turned bright for putting up with the night.”

“The rose endured the company of the thorn; and that is why it was given a nice scent and fine colour.”

[Wisdom, which teaches man to embrace trouble, begins with ‘patience’. Trouble is the companion of love. Man matures only to the extent of the hardships he endures.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Shams taught me that ‘...if one Muslim on earth feels cold, you do not have the right to keep warm!’

“Knowing that there is always a Muslim out there who feels cold, I have forgotten the feeling of warmth.”

[Only a troubled person can truly understand how a person in trouble feels. The sufferer’s friend is, again, the sufferer. A true Muslim must be around grieving people, by the side of the distressed.

The Prophet (pbuh) says:

“In loving, protecting and caring for each other, believers are like a single body. If one part of the body aches, then the rest of parts are also overcome with sleeplessness and fever.” (Bukhari, Adab, 27; Muslim, Birr, 66)

“One who sleeps on a full stomach while his neighbour is hungry, is not a true Muslim.” (Hakim, II, 15)]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Visit your friends frequently; for paths that are not trodden become swarmed by thorns and bushes.”

[Anas ibn Malik (RA) says:

“If Allah’s Messenger did not see any of his fellow believers for three days, he would ask about them. If they were far, he would pray for them;

and if they were ill at home, he would visit them and extend his well-wishes.” (Haythami, II, 295)

Checking up on fellow Muslims, buying them presents however small and sharing their joys and pain, are means of not only of attracting Allah’s (JJ) pleasure but also of strengthening the love and connection between one another. A lack of effort, on the other hand, withers the garden of fraternity, and allows the thorns of discord and ill-will to take over.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Everyone is a friend at times of health, strength and welfare. But in times of trouble and distress, who is a friend except for Allah?”

[True friendship shows in difficult times. Most people are friends only in good days. A true friend is not only prepared to share his friend’s joy, but also his misery in times of distress.

Being a true friend also means to be a relief and not a burden. It is to carry the friend’s problems, without being a burden himself.

It is a grave mistake to assume that the people who surround a person in good times, are true friends. Many people care only about their personal interests. One can never tell who his true friends are, unless the friendship has been tested by hardship.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Be friends with people. The more people there are in a caravan, the greater it will shatter the spirit of bandits.”

[One of the greatest fortunes for a Muslim is to have righteous friends. The self can easily deceive someone who is alone but not so easily in the company of righteous people. Hence, the hadith, “*There is mercy in community, while punishment in separation.*” (Munawi, III, 470)

Thus, one way to protect society from degeneration is to be in the company of the righteous, and for the righteous to stick together. Being distant from the righteous and tagging along with wrongdoers is to spike one’s own spirit with poison.

As **Imam Ghazali** says, physical friendship with wrongdoers gradually turns into a mental friendship; and sooner or later, that turns into an alliance of the heart. This is man's destruction, one step at a time. Thus, another hadith states:

“Solitude is better than a bad friend, while a righteous friend is better than solitude.” (Hakim, III, 343; Bayhaki, Shuab, 256/4993)]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Inspiration was cut off from me this dawn and I instantly knew a few doubtful morsels had entered my body. Knowledge and wisdom are born out of halal food; so are love and compassion. If a morsel causes ignorance, know that it is doubtful, or worse.”

“A morsel that increases light and maturity is the morsel obtained from an honest earning.”

[The great sufi **Sufyan A-Thawri** said:

“A person's a taqwa is proportionate to the purity of his earnings.”

And to a man who asked about the rewards of offering prayer on the front row of a mosque, he replied:

“Brother! Worry about where you stand in your earnings, then stand to pray wherever you wish!”

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Know that wise words without action are like beautiful clothes that are borrowed!”

[Our Prophet (pbuh)] served as an exemplary model by always being the first to practice the truths he preached. And because his words perfectly matched his actions, they always found a way into people's hearts.

Only words spoken from the bottom of the heart can infiltrate another. Words which the speaker does not act by and come only from the tongue enter from one ear and exit from the other; and stand no chance in improving people's conduct.

The Qur'an warns:

“Believers! Why do you say things that you do not do?” (Al-Saff, 61: 2)

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Take a wudu that never breaks.”

[We have come into this world to serve the Almighty. As we all know, deeds of worship that show our service to the Lord such as reciting the Qur'an and offering ritual prayer, are not possible without wudu (ritual washing). The wudu that never breaks is the consciousness of servanthood until the very last breath.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Offer a prayer that never ends.”

[It takes around 5-10 minutes to complete a prayer. But afterwards, it is also necessary to protect the heart like we do in prayer. An unprotected heart becomes careless and, in due course, can slide into evil and immorality. A proper prayer protects a person from both.]

A sign that Allah (JJ) accepts our worship is our ability to retain our state of prayer even after the prayer ends. From this vantage, the prayers of the wise never end. They are conscious of being in the presence of the Lord in every breath.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“For a lover, praying five times is not enough. He wants to pray five hundred thousand times.”

“Could a true lover ever want the reunion to end?”

[The greatest flavour of ritual prayer lies in drawing closer to the Almighty and spending time in His company. The Qur'an, in fact, tells us to **“...Prostrate and draw near.”** (Al-Alaq, 96: 19) The spiritual pleasure from acts of worship is incomparable to physical pleasure. **Ibrahim ibn Adham**, who abandoned his throne to dive into the ocean of divine love, says:

“If our ecstasy in divine love was a tangible thing, kings would forego their kingdoms and treasures just to seize it.”

All desire for physical pleasures fizzles out once they are obtained. As for spiritual pleasures, however, the more they are tasted, the higher the desire becomes. One can, therefore, never get enough of a prayer offered with a consciousness of being in the Almighty's presence. For that reason, the lovers of the Lord wish for that feeling of reunion during prayer, to last forever.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Brother, you must find life in contemplation. If your contemplation is a rose, you are in a garden of roses. If it is a thorn, you are a log for a fireplace.”

[The mind and the heart are always busy in thought. The point is to ensure that they are engaged in thinking about matters that please Allah (JJ). A proper contemplation is not one that is drowned in the swamp of the ego, but one that is inspired by the breeze of spirituality.

Devilish thoughts drag a person into neglect and enchain him to his ego. Spiritual thoughts, on the other hand, refine the heart, increase focus during worship, save a person from the clutches of the ego and take him on a journey towards the land of wisdom and mysteries.

Just as filling the tank with water instead of petrol destroys a car's engine, filling the mind with vain thoughts instead of wisdom, ravages the spirit. One can hardly expect a delicious dinner to come out of a pot filled with stale and rotten ingredients. For our mental wellbeing, we must therefore separate the thoughts we need from those we do not.

About the Muslims who have found salvation, the Qur'an states:

“Those who turn away from worthless talk.” (Al-Muminun, 23: 3)

And a hadith reads:

“It is a sign of the beauty of his religion that a person abandons things of no concern to him.” (Tirmizi, Zuhd, 11)]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Even if the world was at their feet, the mouse and the snake would still eat dirt. The maggot inside the wood would still say, ‘Who enjoys tastier sweets than I?’”

“If a donkey was to walk into the market, it would only buy the raw melon.”

“Man’s value is defined by what he pursues.”

[Man’s pursuits are his mirror. He dreams of the things he pursues, and lives with the aim of acquiring them.

So, beware: What are we pursuing? Is our pursuit this life or the next? Is the itinerary of our dreams drawn up by our egos or our spirits?

Let us remember that there is nothing more foolish than pursuing happiness in the market of misery!]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Can you call a seed dead just because it has been dropped in the soil?”

“When my coffin is being carried away on the day of my death, do not suppose I am carrying grief of this world! Do not assume I am sad for leaving earth!”

“And do not cry over my death! Do not say, ‘what a shame!’ If, while I am alive, I follow my ego and fall into the devil’s trap, that is when you should cry!”

“Do not look at my corpse and wail, ‘ah, separation!’ Know that, this is not a separation for me, but time for my reunion with my Lord!”

“When they place me in the bosom of the earth, do not say ‘farewell!’ For the grave is but a curtain to the Next World, to the gardens of Eden!”

“Now that you have witnessed someone disappear, just wait till you see his rebirth! Think, do the sun and the moon lose any of their glare when they set?”

“Even though this may appear to you as death, it is really a rebirth, a reawakening into a new life!”

[Physically, the human being first lives as an element in the soil, then in the father's loins, the mother's womb, and the parent's arms and inside their hearts. Afterwards, he is transported from this life to the grave, from there starting on new a journey that runs from the cemetery to the afterlife, ending up in either the Fire or the Garden.

Death is thus not the end but the first step to a rebirth. Just as a baby is born into the world by severing all ties to the mother's womb, the spirit departs this mortal realm to awaken to the eternal life.

In that eternal life, man will be called into account for the life he led on earth; and consequently, he will either receive a never-ending happiness or a dire punishment.

So, instead of shuddering from death and trying to escape it, a Muslim's duty is to prepare for it and make it as beautiful as possible.

We must bear in mind that around 124,000 prophets, the companions and countless saints knew how to make their deaths beautiful. Now, they are waiting the Day of Judgment inside their graves, which have been turned into gardens of paradise. For our eternal bliss, we must spend our numbered days on earth in line with the Almighty's pleasure; and instead of building nice graves for ourselves, we must strive to prepare for the grave as well as we can.]

May the Almighty grant our hearts divine wisdom. May He transform all of us into righteous Muslims capable of delving into the depths of the wisdom behind our lives on earth and ultimate departure.

Amin!...





WORDS OF WISDOM FROM

Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him)



Words of Wisdom From Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him) - 11

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“When children play, they sometimes act as though they are running an imaginary store. They pretend that they buy and sell but in reality do not make any profit. They are simply clowning around. The kid who runs the imaginary store comes home at nightfall hungry. And this world is exactly like those kids’ playground.”

[**Abu Bakir Shibli** once came across two children fighting over a walnut. So, he grabbed the walnut off the kids and said:

“Bear with me for a second, so I can divide the walnut in two.”

So, he broke the walnut, only to find that its inside was empty. At that moment, he heard a voice say:

“Now, try and divide this, if you are a man of your word!” An embarrassed Shibli remarked:

“So, all this was just a fight over nothing!” (At-tar, p. 661)

And so are the riches of the world over which human beings fight: they are like an empty walnut.



Man will realise how futile and useless they are, once the alarm of death wakes him up from the short nap of life. He will feel the deepest remorse over the troubles he went through in life for nothing. How strange it is that humans on earth come to blows over things they will truly regret in the grave.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Life on earth is but a dream. Being wealthy on earth is like finding treasure in a dream. The riches of earth are passed from one generation to another for a given time; but, in the end, they remain on earth.”

“What is gold, pearl, emerald, or life for that matter, unless they are spent for love and sacrificed for a beloved?”

[Earth's only value lies in the chance it provides to revive and build an afterlife. Wealth and life hold value only if they are surrendered in the way of Allah (JJ). The earth's pleasures gain worth only when they are turned into a means to console broken hearts. Otherwise, they amount to nothing more than a meaningless toil and the reason for a heavy interrogation in the Next World. A life led without regard for the Next World is like being stuck in an oasis adorned by mirages that are unreachable.

A true Muslim must strive to transform his worldly means into an eternal bliss, and make a habit of winning hearts, which is one of most efficient ways of getting there.

Yunus Emre puts it beautifully:

*I did not come for a cause
My entire cause is for love
The heart is the Friend's home
And I have come to sooth hearts*

A mature Muslim seeking the pleasure of the Greatest Friend, the Almighty, knows that claiming ownership of things cannot be reconciled with true friendship. He does not shy away from any sacrifice in the way of Allah (JJ), knowing that his entire existence is nothing but a divine trust.

As for the miser who avoids spending out of the wealth Allah (JJ) has given, he will not be able to escape the end foretold by the Qur'an:

“As for those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah, give them the news of a painful torment.” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 34)

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Be fair: love is beautiful. What poisons love are your bad habits. You call lust, love. If only you knew how great the distance is between the two.”

“Divine love and ecstasy keep the believer awake. Lust and worldly loves make him stupid and confused.”

[Love's source is Allah (JJ). And Allah (JJ) has thrown the seeds of love inside the heart of every human being. This penchant for love is the most important vehicle on man's journey to divine reunion.

There is, however, true love; and metaphorical love. True love is love felt for Allah (JJ), while metaphorical love is love felt for others. A metaphorical love experienced within the bounds of legitimacy, also serves as a stepping stone for true love. The real danger lies in loving an undeserving object. That is because each person gains a spiritual level in accordance with what he loves; and this is directly affected by whether that person or thing is worthy of love.

We must, therefore, be diligent not to waste our love. The saddest waste is to love people or things that do not deserve it. A love clamped between the interests of the ego is like a flower that bursts through the cracks on a pavement. Sooner or later, it will be trampled on by careless feet. How sad it is for a pearl to be thrown in a garbage bin! What a waste it is to become the property of incompetent hands!

The heart of a person able to reserve his love for Allah (JJ) can also fondly envelop all beings dearest to Allah (JJ). This is a state where, regardless of their form or appearance, one is able to compassionately embrace all creatures for the sake of Allah (JJ), which Yunus Emre calls *“Loving creation, for the sake of the Creator.”*

Saints are people with an ability to grow the seeds of divine love planted in their hearts into lush trees hanging off with fruit. It is for this reason that they are always benevolent towards their surroundings. Friendship with the Lord makes them friends with entire creation.

The great **Ismail Ata** says that to be friends with the Lord, one must:

“Be a shade in the sun, a coat in the cold and bread during hunger.”

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“The breaths of prophets affect even stones. Even mountains lean forward to listen to them speak. But not even a single pearl of wisdom they throw, lands on a fool!”

“Counselling an ignorant who is fast asleep on the bed of neglect, is like sowing a seed on barren land or watering the desert. A cloth ripped by ignorance cannot hold any patch! So, try not to plant therein the seeds of wisdom!”

[Teaching wisdom to an unworthy person is not only an injustice to wisdom, but also an injustice to the more able people being deprived of the opportunity. A Muslim must therefore set the tone of his speech in line with the capacity of the listener and be careful of what to say and where to say it. He must speak, only if he believes his words may have an impact. Otherwise, he should keep silent. As the Qur'an says:

“Remind, then, if the reminder benefits.” (Al-Ala, 87: 9)

Silence is better than speech in situations where offering advice will clearly have no benefit. **Rumi** (May Allah have mercy on him) expresses this truth with the words, *“Do not sell mirrors in the market of the blind or sing in the market of the deaf!”* Besides, benefiting from an advice is a matter of destiny. Even the best words of advice have no power on those who lack the potential. Best would be to avoid wasting time with them, and sparing the words for those who can understand them.

The figurative story below sums this up beautifully:

One day Prophet Isa (AS) was running frenetically, as if being chased by a lion. A curious man ran after him and asked him why and he looked back and said:

“I am running from the fool!” This time the man asked:

“Are you not the Prophet Isa (AS) who cures the blind and the deaf and revives the dead with prayer? Why do run when you can do anything you wish?”

Prophet Isa (AS) replied:

“Trust me, I recited Allah’s (JJ) Greatest Name (*Ismul-Adham*) on the blind and deaf; and they were cured. I read it upon a corpse and it came back to life. I recited it upon a poor man and he became rich. But even if I recite it on the heart of a fool a thousand times, it would be to no avail. The fool became as thick as a brick and even more stubborn in his folly!”

All the more curious, the man once again asked:

“Why does the *Ismul-Adham* prayer not benefit the fool, when it cures every single illness? What is the wisdom behind this?”

Prophet Isaa (AS) replied:

“Foolishness is a disease that is part of God’s anger. Other illnesses are not. Addiction is also a disease; but you feel sympathy only for the addict. As for foolishness, it is a disease that often also wounds and infects other people.”

Men of wisdom have, therefore, said:

“*Three people can never be the friends of Allah: the arrogant, the miser and the fool.*”]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“*The maybeetle always carries dung. Hence, it faints when exposed to rose water. Its medicine is the dirty, smelly stuff, as that is what it is used to.*

People who advise for the sake of Allah wish to open the gates of mercy on the depressed by curing them with beautiful words of wisdom that are very much like amber and rose water.

Whosoever reaps no benefit from the beautiful scents of wisdom, should realise by now that his nose is accustomed to stench.

Take your share of light, of advice and of good and beauty. Do not poke your nose in filth like the maybeetle! BE A HUMAN, A HUMAN!..

[A law of attraction governs all species and their habitats. A nightingale, for example, likes lush gardens, springs that flow melodically and fine sceneries that soothe the spirit. Creatures like the dung beetle, on the other hand, relish in base pleasures.

Just as a sewer rat wallows in sewage, wrongdoers mistake their depravation for happiness. As they are accustomed to evilness, they stubbornly flee all means that may take them to true satisfaction.

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) underlines this, when he says:

“Dung beetle! You flee the rose garden; but your hatred of the garden only points to its magnificence.”

Fools can therefore never grasp wisdom. Trying to teach them, is injustice to wisdom; and a waste of time and effort. It is as futile as the abundant April showers that rain down on a rock only to glance off.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Be as silent as a book when next to the ignorant.”

[In other words, do not argue with the ignorant. An argument is simply a battle to gain the upper hand over the other person. More often than not, it incites the pride and egos of raw individuals, and further constricts their already narrow intellects. Consequently, they find it even harder to accept the truth.

Wise people have a mature spirit, by which they can embrace any given truth, regardless of who they hear it from and how. This is not the case with the ignorant. For this reason, it is necessary to approach them with

even greater care and convey the truths to them using a more appropriate language. Sometimes an evocative silence or a deep stare can teach a lot more than words.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“If you wish to befriend the Almighty Allah, know that you cannot go to a friend emptyhanded. Visiting a friend emptyhanded is like going to a mill without wheat. On the day of resurrection, the Almighty will ask His servants:

‘What gift have you brought for the day of judgment?’ He will then proclaim:

‘You have all come emptyhanded, foodless, alone and needy, just like you were at the time We created you. Now, speak: what gift have you brought for the day of judgment? Or did you have no hope of returning here from earth and facing Allah? Did you think that the news of the afterlife in the Qur'an, was nonsense?’

O human being, created in the finest form! How can you appear at the gates of the Lord with an empty heart?

Cut back from your food and sleep just a bit in this mortal life, and prepare a gift for the time you will meet the Almighty!”

[Every man born into this world is a passenger on a journey to eternity. Just as travellers prepare food for the road before they set out, man who has come from the Almighty and is bound to return to Him, must also make preparations for this journey to eternity and save up provisions that will feed him in the Next World.

Our Lord declares:

“Whatever good you do, Allah knows it. Take a provision; but the best provision is taqwa of Allah. So have taqwa of me people of intelligence.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 197)

Time is our most precious capital. Acting like natives on earth and mucking around with selfish pursuits at the expense of ignoring our eternal revenues, is a grave ignorance that will only lead to a bitter remorse.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“While trying to fill up the sack, make sure it does not leak from the hole at the bottom.”

[The eternal provisions all human beings need are, first and foremost, faith; and then deeds of worship and righteous conduct. Damaging them with the diseases of the heart and bad habits is no different to puncturing a hole in the sack we use to collect our provisions for the afterlife.

To come of age, a Muslim must adorn himself with good character. For that, he needs to be humble, fair, trustworthy, righteous, polite, modest, soft-hearted, compassionate, patient, content and sincere.

And to ensure his good deeds do not go to waste, he must vigorously avoid envy, lying, backbiting, injustice, holding grudges, greed, stinginess, arrogance and hypocrisy.

We must especially avoid squandering the rewards of prayer through lack of focus, of fasting through gossiping and backbiting, of alms and donations through arrogance, and all righteous conduct through self-satisfaction and pride. Again, we must refrain from conduct that harms sincerity in our deeds of worship, and from doing them for the love of any mortal person. Otherwise, we will lose all the rewards we would otherwise have.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Yusuf (AS) asked a friend who had returned from a journey:

‘What gift have you brought me?’

His friend replied:

‘What do you not have? As there is nothing more beautiful than your face, I have brought you a mirror, so you can use it to gaze at the manifestations of beauty that transpire on you, anytime you wish!..’

[Our Lord is the creator and owner of all things. He does not need anything. There is no gift we can possibly take to Him as a token of our gratitude, that He would not have something better in His infinite treasure. He is the absolute beauty and the source of all things beautiful.

The most beautiful and precious of all created beings is the one with a pure and polished heart that reflects the Lord's beauty. Therefore, the worthiest gift one could take to the Almighty is a heart that has become a polished mirror to reflect His beautiful names and attributes. Allah loves a servant, when He sees the manifestation of His beautiful names on that servant's heart without association.

As the Qur'an states:

"Allah invites to the abode of peace..." (Yunus, 10: 25)

Of course, every invitation has a condition and every blessing comes at a cost. To gain eternal salvation, a person must strive to obtain what the Almighty values the most; and that is a purified heart.

Our Lord, in fact, pronounces:

"The Day when neither wealth nor children will be of any use - except to those who come to Allah with sound and flawless hearts." (Al-Shura, 26: 88-89)

A flawless heart is like a crystal-clear glass purified from the dirt of all things that take a person away from Allah (JJ), and which sparkles with the light of faith. Like an unswerving compass to the truth, the light of a pure heart allows a believer to separate right from wrong and good from evil.

The value of all good deeds is proportionate to the purity of the heart. That is because the heart is the focal point of the Lord's gaze. **Our Prophet** (pbuh) conveys this truth with the words:

"Allah most certainly does not look at your bodies or appearances; He only looks at your hearts." (Muslim, Birr, 33)]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

"A man used to chant the Lord's name all day; and every time he said, 'Allah, Allah', it was like he had just tasted the sweetest honey. One day the devil came to him, and whispered:

'Why do you constantly say, 'Allah, Allah'? Even though you have been doing it for all this time, has Allah once said, 'Yes, My servant, I am

here; so what do you wish? Will you not ever get tired? Until when will you keep saying Allah's name?

The man, who had never kept Allah's name off his tongue, despaired and quit. He went to sleep heartbroken. In his dream, he saw Khidr, who asked:

'Why did you stop doing that wonderful deed and quit chanting Allah's name?'

The man said, 'Allah never responded to any of it. I never heard the words, 'Yes, My servant' from His presence. And I was afraid that I had been banished from His door.'

Khidr thereupon gave him the following word of wisdom:

'Servant of Allah! Know that you saying 'Allah', is Allah saying 'Yes, My servant!' Is everyone lucky enough to be able to chant Allah's name? Your ability to say Allah, is a sign that Allah loves you!'

After hearing this, the man woke up and carried on chanting 'Allah.'"

[Being able to remember and worship the Almighty are divine blessings that merit gratitude in their own right.

If the entire creation was to serve the Almighty, they would not be able to add to His glory in the slightest. Again, if they were to rebel against Him, they would not subtract from His glory in the least. The Almighty does not need anything, including our deeds of worship. He transcends all things and needs. It is us who need to win His pleasure and mercy through genuine worship and good conduct.

The ego and the devil resort to a thousand tricks to distract a person from worshipping and obeying Allah (JJ). Abandoning deeds of worship due to a suspicion that they are not being accepted, is to fall into one of the devil's many traps.

A Muslim's duty is to carry out the deeds of worship to the best of his ability; and instead of resorting to his own reason, he should let the Almighty decide if they will be accepted. The sole authority in accepting

deeds is Allah (JJ). Using personal judgment on this matter is to overstep one's limits and violate the courtesy of servanthood.

No matter how faulty or deficient, we need to show every effort to perform our compulsory deeds and ask the Almighty to forgive our flaws. In every step of the way, we must seek refuge in His benevolence and mercy. Our hearts must embody a balanced mindset of servanthood that fluctuates between fear and hope.

If it is a mistake to suppose that every one of our deeds will be accepted, it is an even bigger mistake to let ourselves go in the arms of despair and abandon worshipping altogether, assuming they will be rejected.

We are obliged to stick to our duty of servanthood with humility, knowing that no matter how much we worshipped the Almighty, we would never be able to repay our debts of gratitude. Regardless of what we do, we ultimately have no other choice than to hope for His clemency and compassion.]

May the Almighty give us all the opportunity to live a life of servanthood that complies with His pleasure.

Amin!...





WORDS OF WISDOM FROM

Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him)



Words of Wisdom From Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him) - 12

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Most people fear the death of their bodies. What they should really fear is the death of their hearts.”

[People mostly fear disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, wildfires and war that claim a high number of lives. Adversities that merit the greatest fear, however, are to fall into committing those actions that Allah had forbidden that spit venom into the heart. If they only knew, they would dread the terrible scenes those evil actions cause in the grave and the afterlife.

Every forbidden action is a dark blemish on the heart. When the heart turns pitch black from those actions and loses its spirituality altogether, it also loses its ability to discern good from evil. It can then commit the most horrible crimes without even blinking an eye, as if listening to a sweet song. A heart that has lost the sensitivity to forbidden things is no different than a corpse lying in a ditch.

Wahb ibn Munabbih says:



“People are strange! They mourn over dead bodies but do not shed a single tear for dead hearts, when, in fact, this is the real catastrophe!”

A dead heart is like a ship adrift in the middle of the ocean without a rudder, and counting the minutes before a whirlpool pulls it to the bottom of the seafloor. It lacks the device to steer clear from taking the wrong turn into destruction.

Umar ibn Abdulaziz sums it up evocatively:

“wrong actions are a fire. Only dead hearts have the nerve to reach out and touch them. If they were alive, they would surely feel the heat.”

Abdullah ibn Masud (RA) explains the difference between hearts that are dead and alive:

“A believer perceives his sins as though he is sitting underneath a grand mountain that might fall on him any minute. He trembles at the thought that it may. For a habitual sinner, a sin is no more important than a fly that buzzes above his nose.” (Bukhari, Daawat, 4; Muslim, Tawbah, 3)

People with forgetful hearts worry about their worldly losses and think of ways to make amends. Yet, they do not show the smallest care for the spiritual losses that throw their eternal lives into jeopardy.

When they catch a physical illness, for instance, they rush to the doctor and seize fast onto treatment and medicine. Sadly, they are not as sensitive when it comes to the perils that poison their spirituality. In a drunken stupor induced by neglect, they idly watch the destruction of their spirits and this attitude shows in their everyday conduct.

Again, while serious about their children's education to have and bright future in the world, they do not have the slightest worry for their kids' eternal diplomas and wellbeing for the afterlife, when the most precious schooling anyone can receive in this passing world is in spiritual path, or *marifatullah*, which is to be trained in being a proper servant to the Lord.

A man had come to visit **Sami Efendi**, to both ask for a prayer and introduce him to his nephews. While introducing his nephews, he said with an air of pride:

“These young men, master, are on their way to study in the United States to become engineers. We would appreciate it if you prayed for them!”

Sami Efendi gave them a meaningful smile and said:

“This poor man is also a graduate of the Istanbul’s old Darulfunun University. But *the real education lies in direct knowledge of Allah that is marifatullah*.”³²

Fadl ibn Abbas (RA) says:

“People really surprise me. When a child of mine dies, they roll up in their thousands to give their condolences; yet not one of them comes to comfort me, when I miss a single prayer in congregation.

Let me assure you that, for me, missing a single prayer in congregation is a far greater misfortune than burying an adult, scholarly and righteous child.”

Abu'l-Hasan Harakani also offers the following warning, which underlines man’s general indifference to his spiritual losses:

*“If a spark from an oven flies onto your clothes, you instantly rush to put it out! Yet, how do you allow the fires of as conceit, jealousy and hypocrisy that scorch your religion, to keep burning in your heart?”*³³

For saints, the real cause for concern are the spiritual hazards that endanger man’s eternity.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“The death of the body is a gift to humans who have unlocked its mystery. What harm could scissors do to pure gold?”

[For a righteous servant, death is a reunion. It is a means to meet **the Highest Friend**. In Rumi’s (May Allah have mercy on him) words, it is **the wedding night**. Thus, in the eyes of those who love Allah (JJ), death marks the joy of returning home from the exile of earth.

In the *Mathnawi*, **Rumi** (May Allah have mercy on him) expands on the death of **Bilal** (RA), a loyal devotee of Allah (JJ) and His Messenger

32. Mustafa Eriş, *Mahmud Sâmi Efendi'den Hâtralar*, I, 20-21.

33. Harakani, *Nuru'l-Ulum*, p. 239.

(pbuh), as an example of the truth above. While his wife weeps by his bedside, Bilal (RA) is exhilarated at the thought of being only moments away from reuniting with those he truly loves, as he peacefully breathes his last and returns his soul to its true owner.

Perhaps the most truthful of them all, **Abu Bakr** (RA), was also elated by the reunion during his final moments, which **Aisha** (RA) recounts below:

“I went next to my father **Abu Bakr**, as he lay terminally ill on his bed.

‘On which day did the Prophet (pbuh) pass away?’ he asked.

‘Monday’, I replied.

‘What day is it?’ he inquired.

‘Monday’, I said.

‘I just hope I can die by midnight’, he said. Shortly after, he added:

‘If I die tonight, do not wait for tomorrow to bury me! For me, the best of days and nights are those nearest to the Prophet (pbuh)!’” (Ahmed, I, 8)

While death sends shivers down the spines of the unprepared, for a genuine servant with an unshakable heart saturated with divine love, it turns into the most beautiful date with destiny.

A hollow claim of love, however, does not cut it. True lovers relish the opportunity to meet with the beloved. Pretenders, on the other hand, would hide themselves from view, if they could, and flee for miles and miles.

Such was the mentality of the Israelites, who the Qur'an challenged with the words:

“Say: ‘You Jews, if you claim you are friends of Allah to the exclusion of other people, then wish death if you are telling the truth.’

But they will never wish for death because of what they have done. Allah knows the wrongdoers.” (Al-Jumuah, 62: 6-7)³⁴

34. Also see, Al-Baqarah, 94-95.

Thus, the death of a righteous Muslim is not so much a cause for grief as is the death of a person who has squandered his life on the wrong path and consequently laid waste to his eternity. Death does no harm to a person whose heart shines with the light of belief. Besides, every soul is bound to die when the time comes. A person, however, whose heart has long been dead, is already like a living corpse, regardless of how long he lives. The gist of this is captured by the below incident:

Accompanied by his students, **Najmaddin Kubra** (May Allah have mercy on him) once attended the funeral of a righteous man. As the imam stood by the grave to pray for the deceased, Najmaddin Kubra smiled. His students asked him why. At first, he did not answer. When they insisted, he said:

“The heart of the imam making the prayer is dead, while the heart of the corpse in the grave is alive. I was simply surprised to notice a dead heart pray for another with a living heart.”

When all is said and done, the death of a righteous Muslim who has cleansed his soul and purified his heart is simply a birth into eternal happiness. The physical liveliness of a spiritually ignorant person, does not reach to his heart. Only a pure heart will benefit man in the afterlife.

It is for that reason that **Imam Ghazzali** has said:

“Improve your character and perfect your virtues. For you are human not through your flesh, but through your spirit.”

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“The rose’s friend is the thorn.”

[The rose acquires its beauty by befriending the thorn. By putting up with the thorn that it achieves its wonderful appearance and refreshing fragrance.

Man also gains a spiritual level by enduring hardships and remaining patient. Those who Allah (JJ) loves the most are those who have matured through the toughest circumstances.

Esad Erbili says it brilliantly:

“You cannot fear getting pricked by thorns on the walkway of the rose garden of love. From above every thorn, I collect hundreds of rosebuds!”

“In the orchard of being a dervish, I take pleasure from pain. If I take the thorns for a pillow, I see the Rose in my dream!”]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“The fool hears about the deaths of others but never for once does he think about his own death...”

[Rebellion against mortality is embedded in the ego. A person enslaved to his ego despises death and wishes to live on earth forever. He cringes at the thought of death. He is uneasy with anything that reminds him of the Next World. He essentially wants to flee death and the beyond and likes to think he can enjoy a life without repercussions.

In the mind of a bewildered person of this type, death is always the destiny of others. Even if he was to attend countless funerals in his lifetime, he does not want to think, even for a second, that one day it will be his turn to enter the grave. He likes to believe that somehow, he is exempt from death and this is a sign of the death of his heart.

The pagans of Mecca had told the **Prophet** (pbuh) that they would follow him, only on the condition he stopped giving them news of the afterlife, abolished all *harams* and kept his hands off their idols. Today, the attitudes of those discomfited by any mention of the Next World, who seldom reflect on death and wish instead for a careless life without worship or restrictions, is a glaring reminder of the attitude so prevalent during the age of ignorance.

For example, when a mosque is built in a suburb where people are not interested Islam, the prices of houses nearest to the mosque drops, simply because the mosque's funeral prayers dampen their mood, when they would rather live recklessly without sparing a thought for what is to come.

Again, when the council installed a sign at the gates of Istanbul's Zincirlikuyu Cemetery inscribed with the verse:

“Every soul will taste death...” (Al-Ankabut, 29: 57), many people asked for it to be removed, saying it “...dampened their spirits!”

The materialist and liberal ethos of today’s capitalist hegemony feeds on the indulgence of worthless worldly desires; with all the adverts projecting this image of living carefree in the world as freedom and fulfilment, as if there is no meaning to life and nothing beyond this world. Getting caught up in this disarray is the greatest spiritual distraction and deception because the reality is that at every moment we are moving away from this world and inching closer to death. Only the stupid assume they will be saved from the afterlife by ignoring it. No one has heard of a person who has escaped death, the afterlife. What the Almighty says regarding man’s horror and confusion on the Day he is resurrected, is in stark contrast:

يَقُولُ الْإِنْسَانُ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَيْنَ الْمَفَرُّ

“On that day man will say, ‘Where can I run?’” (Al-Qiyamah, 75: 10)

Elsewhere, the Qur'an reveals man's only hope of escape:

فَهُرُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ

“So, flee to Allah!” (Al-Dhariyat, 51: 50)

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“If you become the owner of two eyes that recognise the Real, you will see Him everywhere you look, both in this world and the next.

“We sit with our Friend; yet, we ask Him, ‘Where are you, Friend?’ Even though we live on His land, we keep asking ‘Where is the Friend?’. It is only because we have lost our minds.”

[For hearts that have overcome neglect, everything speaks of the Almighty. In the eyes of the wise who recognise the Real, every being is a manifestation of divine power. There is no particle in the universe that does not introduce man to his Lord.]

Through its body language, the divine order that operates so harmoniously in the universe, illustrates to seeing eyes and shouts out to hearing

ears the fact it is a clear sign of the Almighty's power; and that coincidence cannot explain the existence of a universe in which nothing exists in vain.

From its flora, fauna, human beings and non-living entities to the smallest cells and particles all the way to the mysterious electrons and protons inside the atom, the cosmos is decked out as delicately as a bridal chamber way beyond the most imaginative mind and taste, to showcase a glimpse of divine power and glory.

For people of intellect, it is therefore impossible to deny the existence and oneness of the Almighty. It has, hence, been said:

"The Almighty is so visible in His manifestations in space and time that He is invisible due to the strength of His visibility."

Simpler put, for people of wisdom, the Almighty is invisible only because we are incapable of capturing the sheer intensity of His manifestation.

For example, if a five-thousand-volt light was switched on inside a room, the eyes would be too blinded to see anything. It is thus clear how the Almighty, who possesses a light that is infinitely more supreme, is unseen to human sight.

A man who gazes at a springtime scenery in daylight is able to see all the lively colours of spring and discern the greenery in all its tones. Yet, he does not notice the light which makes that entire spectacle possible, even though it is only thanks to light that he is able to see all those colours. Here, the light has become concealed from sight, due to the intensity of its appearance.

To give another example, we live thanks to air; yet we are unable to see it, even though it surrounds us entirely. We only feel it when we take a breath. Yet, let alone deny its existence based on the fact we do not see it, we say:

"We cannot live without air. Only through air do all creatures live."

Thus, as a being beyond imagination and cognition, the Almighty is both hidden and evident. He is hidden in terms of His essence, while evident through His manifestations.

That the Almighty has pulled the curtain of the unseen over our eyes is only due to the fact that this world is a land of trial. Without that curtain between us and the unseen, faith would no longer be a voluntary act on our hearts grasping meaning but something directly tangible to our empirical senses, and lose its value. The curtain will in fact be raised in the afterlife whereby not a single person will deny the Almighty's existence; but this acceptance will no longer hold any value or reward.

In that regard, the Qur'an defines believers as those who:

“Those who believe in the unseen...” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 3)

For the wise who have properly come to terms with this truth, every single being in the cosmos is a manifestation of the Almighty's infinite power and majesty.

Those blinded by the veil of ignorance, however, interpret the manifestations of divine power and wisdom in the universe as instances of coincidental natural events. As the poet says, they are like:

“Fish who do not know the ocean despite swimming in it...”

They believe in the lie of freedom, which the ego and the devil continually whisper into their ears, and are slaves shackled to the idols of ambition and desire. They fall into the trap of mistaking their misery for joy. In the words of **Necip Fazil**, they try to *“fly a kite without being aware of the sky.”* Despite enjoying countless divine blessings, they live witlessly, with a nerve and ignorance to rebel against the divine order.

It is, therefore, a terrible tragedy for man, the pinnacle of creation, to gaze at the cosmos with an empty stare like fish oblivious of the sea in which they swim.

Junayd Baghdadi says:

“Not seeing is better for some people than seeing; for they do not take lessons from what they see, anyway.”

People unable to draw lessons from the divine manifestations of power and majesty displayed across the universe and lack the wit to proceed from

the effect to the cause and from the art to the artist, suffer from blindness of the heart's eye. The Qur'an asks:

“Have they not travelled about the earth and do they not have hearts to understand with or ears to hear with? It is not their eyes which are blind but the hearts inside their breasts which are blind.” (Al-Haj, 22: 46)

What makes man the most honourable of all creation is his inherent skill to gaze at the mysteries of the heavens and earth with an eye of wisdom; and capacity to receive a share of divine knowledge which encompasses the cosmos and his own being.]

May Allah the Almighty transform us all into wise and righteous servants who behold the mysteries and wisdom He exhibits throughout the universe, with the eye of the heart.

Amin!...





WORDS OF WISDOM FROM

Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him)



Words of Wisdom From Rumi

(May Allah have mercy on him) - 13

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Work for the love of Allah and serve for the love of Allah! What is it to you whether people accept or reject it?”

[The most important condition of having deeds accepted is sincerity, which is to aim for the Almighty's pleasure in all actions. Given the intentions are sincere, the Almighty will even reward a person for things he is unable to do due to a lack of means. Depending on the sincerity of the intention, the Almighty reimburses the smallest deed with a mountain of rewards.

The below story is a wonderful example. Not long after the death of the former ruler and hero of Khurasan **Amr ibn Layth**, a righteous Muslim saw him in a dream. They had the following exchange.

“How did Allah treat you?”

“He forgave me.”

“Why did He forgive you?”

“I had once climbed on top of a mountain. When I saw my soldiers' strength and numbers from high above, I got emotional, and thought:



‘I wish I had lived in the time of the **Prophet** (pbuh), so I could have helped and supported him; and maybe die in his cause.’

And because of my intention and desire, the Almighty Allah forgave me and immersed me in His mercy.” (Qadi Iyaz, *Shifa*, II, 28-29)

A hadith, in fact, states:

“*The intention of a believer is better than his action.*” (Suyuti, *Jamiu’s-Saghir*, II, 194)

A sincere intention is to action, what the spirit is to the body. Conversely, being insincere and flaunting deeds of worship and good action, scatters their rewards to dust, even if they may appear as high as mountains. What is important in the sight of Allah (JJ) is the sincerity of the heart.

The Qur'an states:

“**So let him who hopes to meet his Lord act rightly and not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord.**” (Al-Kahf, 18: 110)

The creed of *tawhid*, which is belief in the Lord's oneness, does not tolerate associating anyone or anything with Allah. All worship and good action must therefore be performed solely for the Almighty's pleasure.

If one associates mortals in his worship and action, that is to say, if one does these things to win the favour of the people, not only will he have dissipated their rewards, he will have also made the grave error of showing off, which the Prophet (pbuh) calls ‘minor idolatry’. And this is a grave danger that threatens faith.

Our Prophet (pbuh) once said:

“*What I fear for you most is minor idolatry.*”

The companions asked, “Messenger of Allah, what is minor idolatry?”

The Prophet (pbuh) replied:

“*It is hypocrisy; showing off. On the day of judgment when people receive the rewards of their deeds, Allah will call out to the pretenders:*

'Go and collect your rewards from the people you showed off to on earth. And see if they have anything to give!'" (Ahmed, V, 428, 429)

Another hadith mentions that on the day of judgment, the first batch of people to be judged unfavourably, will be the rich, who people thought of as wise and charitable. Allah (JJ), however, will reject their deeds, on account of the fact that the better part of their intention was overcome by the desire to be admired by people.³⁵

Say, for example, if someone funds the construction of a mosque, school or a Qur'an learning centre during his lifetime but, to immortalise his reputation, lays down the condition that these be named after him, he will have wasted his rewards. After he dies, however, there is no harm in his family or children funding charitable institutions and naming these after him, as a means of attracting prayers for him and ensuring that he is remembered fondly.

In spite of how crucial it is to abide within the boundaries of sincerity in all intentions, some raw souls have still made a habit of 'boasting' under the guise of 'modesty'. They are quick to announce their good deeds to the public with an implicit hope of purchasing a reputation and attracting the praise of mortals. Through shallow words like, "*I have unfortunately been able to do pilgrimage a mere ten times*", "*This poor man can only recite the entire Qur'an just once a week*" or "*Sadly, I have only built one mosque until now*", they market to the public the deeds which they apparently did only for the Almighty's sake. This ugly trait is known as '**arrogance disguised as modesty**'; and despite appearing as a virtue to some, is nothing but the person destroying the rewards of his deeds.

So, to protect sincerity, it is best to conceal good deeds as much as possible. But neither is it right to desist from doing good just because it has to be done publicly. For instance, staying back from praying in congregation due to a fear of hypocrisy, is to be conned by the ego. Likewise, thinking, "*I cannot pray without showing off; so I would rather stop doing it than watch it get flung in my face in the Next World*" and quitting ritual prayer altogether, is to fall into the devil's trap.

35. See, Muslim, Imarah, 152.

Thus, in situations of necessity or for the purpose of encouraging people, there is good in offering good deeds or charity in public. But one has to protect the heart from the viruses of pride, arrogance and boastfulness; and aim only for the pleasure of Allah (JJ).

Let us not forget that our Lord wants us to be sincere at all times. He demands that our intentions be genuine. He wants us to serve Him strictly for His pleasure, free of any expectations from others and He warns us of the dire consequences of showing off:

“You who believe! do not nullify your charity by demands for gratitude or insulting words, like him who spends his wealth, showing off to people and not having belief in Allah and the Last Day!

His likeness is that of a smooth stone coated with soil, which, when heavy rain falls on it, it is left stripped bare. They have no power over anything they have earned. Allah does not guide disbelieving people.”
(Al-Baqarah, 2: 264)

Elsewhere, the Almighty declares:

“Allah has bought from the believers their selves and their wealth in return for the Garden” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 111)

As Muslims, we must, therefore, think:

It is the Almighty who has given us both our lives and wealth. On top of that, He promises us the Garden in return for using these blessings in a way that pleases Him. Who else but Allah (JJ) can give such a magnificent prize? Which mortal has that power? What else could it be other than a fool’s errand, for a true Muslim to hypocritically parade his deeds to mortals and include their pleasure in what should be reserved exclusively for Allah (JJ)? When there is the greater option to present physical and financial sacrifices to the Almighty, can there be a deception more stupid than including mortals as partners?

When giving charity, our **Mother Aisha** (RA) was particularly sensitive not to harm the rewards of her deeds. She would even respond to the prayers of the poor in equal measure. She was once asked:

“You say a prayer, when you are the one giving charity. Why?” She replied:

“I fear that their prayer is in response to my donation so I make the same prayer for them, so that my offering is genuine and that I expect its rewards only from Allah.”³⁶

Equally sensitive were **Ali** (RA) and his wife **Fatimah** (RA), who, despite being needy themselves, had donated all their food to the poor, orphans and prisoners of war, telling them:

“We feed you only out of desire for the face of Allah. We do not want any repayment from you or any thanks. Truly we fear from our Lord a glowering, calamitous Day.” (Al-Insan, 76: 9-10)

These exemplary figures were meticulous to protect the sincerity of their intentions and keep all worldly interests from casting a shadow over their deeds.

We must remember that only our Lord the Almighty can reward our feats of worship and altruism in the Next World, not mortals. Therefore, the plea:

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ مَقْصُودِي وَرِضَاؤُكَ مَطْلُوبِي

“*My Lord! My only aim is You, and my request is solely Your pleasure*” must echo in our hearts at every moment.]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Are you looking for a customer to sell spiritual gold in the market of this fleeting world? Then, who is a better customer than Allah?”

[To make a profit, every smart trader prepares and markets his goods in line with the standards and preferences of his customers.

A true Muslim must perform all his worship and action in such a way that appeals to the Almighty, and present these in the manner He likes.

36. Commission, *Sünen-i Ebû Dâvûd Terceme ve Şerhi*, İstanbul, 1988, VI, 304.

As **Abu Bakr** (RA) says, on this marketplace of earth, time is our capital, the Garden is our profit and the Fire is our bankruptcy.

We must also remember that on this marketplace, the most profitable trade anyone can do is with the creator of the universe who possesses all gifts and generosity. No man can offer the revenue Allah (JJ) can. Given that a person presents the blessings back to the Almighty with genuine gratitude and sincerity, the Almighty rewards them up to seven hundred times their value.

The Qur'an states:

"The metaphor of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is that of a seed of grain which produces seven ears; in every ear there are a hundred grains. Allah gives such multiplied increase to whoever He wishes. Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing." (Al-Baqarah, 2: 261)

"Lend a generous loan to Allah. Whatever good you send ahead for yourselves you will find it with Allah as something better and as a greater reward" (Al-Muzzammil, 73: 20)

For wise and true Muslims, the most profitable earning is to gain the infinite rewards befitting of the glory of the Allah, the most generous.

The below incident explains this wonderfully:

A famine had taken hold of Medina during **Abu Bakr's** (RA) time as caliph; and it was around then that a hundred-camel caravan arrived loaded with wheat. People rushed to the caravan the moment they saw it, with some offering as many as seven dirhams for wheat normally worth one dirham. But its owner Uthman (RA) refused, saying:

"No! Someone is offering a better price. I will sell these to him."

The companions left the caravan downcast and went to Caliph Abu Bakr (RA). They explained what had just happened, telling him how disappointed they were with Uthman's (RA) attitude.

Abu Bakr (RA), however, sensed there had to be a reason behind it, considering how virtuous a companion Uthman (RA) was. So, he said:

“Do not be hasty in thinking bad about Uthman. He is the Prophet’s (pbuh) son-in-law and friend in paradise. Perhaps you misunderstood his words.”

Shortly after, he led them all to Uthman (RA). There, he said:

“Uthman, the companions are saddened by some things you said.”

Uthman (RA) explained:

“That is true, the Prophet’s caliph! They offered seven to one, whereas the Almighty Allah is offering seven hundred to one. So, I sold the wheat to the better suitor!”

Uthman (RA) then proceeded to donate all the wheat to Medina’s poor. He also had the hundred camels slaughtered and their meat distributed.

Abu Bakr (RA) was elated. He kissed Uthman (RA) on the forehead and said:

“I knew the companions had misunderstood you!”³⁷

Spiritually elevated souls that have forgone their own egos and become lost in the love Allah, live in such a magnificent clime of reunion that their eyes and hearts can see no one but Him. They are almost entranced by the satisfaction of having reunited with the Lord. Spending their efforts and wealth in the way of Allah (JJ) becomes more valuable than all the worldly pleasures put together. They live and breathe in a land of ecstasy, which the great **Yunus Emre** alludes to in the words, *“I found the source of all honeys so let my hive be plundered!”*

Prior to helping someone out, my late father **Musa Efendi** would always take special care to be extra polite, knowing that before the needy ever set their hands on it, the money would first reach Allah’s (JJ) hand of might. He would place the money in an envelope on which he would write appeasing and graceful words such as, *“Dear respected so-and-so! We whole-heartedly thank you for accepting our gift...”*

37. See, *Hz. Osman Zinnüreyn*, Ramazanoğlu Mahmud Sâmi, p. 140.

Offering further insight into the importance of courtesy during charity are the below words of the great **Abu'l-Lays Samarkandi**:

“The giver must hand the donation with a feeling of gratitude towards the taker. That is because while the donation helps the taker sort out a worldly need, it delivers the giver to divine pleasure and endless blessings in the afterlife. So, in effect, the transaction is more lucrative for the giver; and hence, he must thank the recipient.”

Saints also say:

“Worship takes man to paradise; yet, courtesy and respect in worship takes man to Allah and makes him the Lord’s friend.”]

Rumi (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

“Let the pilgrims find the Lord of the Kaba. Once they find Him, they will see the Kaba everywhere.”

[The Almighty demands from us a life of servanthood that exhibits a harmony between the inner and outer, form and spirit, as well as heart and body. Just as the Kaba is the direction in all our ritual prayers, the direction of the heart must always be the Almighty. A heart that is with the Almighty at all times is like a virtual Kaba, wherever it may be. This is in stark contrast to a person whose heart is bereft of the Almighty, despite his body facing the Kaba.

It goes without saying that deeds of worship performed clumsily with a heart unmindful of the Lord, are nothing more than uninspired aerobic exercises that lack true value.

It is clear that we need to pay utmost attention to the heart and guard it against neglect. We must also develop the heart and seek a share of divine knowledge to ensure it remains with the Almighty. To tell us how this can be achieved, the Almighty reveals:

الَّا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُ الْقُلُوبُ

“Only in remembering Allah do hearts find peace.” (Al-Rad, 13: 28)

The greatest bliss lies in pinning a togetherness with the Lord inside the heart. A man who acquires this spiritual blend lives and breathes in the climes of worshipping the Lord at every stage of his life.

The Almighty declares:

“Allah is with you, wherever you may be...” (Al-Hadid, 57: 4)

“We are closer to man than his jugular vein.” (Qaf, 50: 16)

“Know that Allah enters between a man and his heart...” (Al-Anfal, 8: 24)

“When my servants ask about me, say: I am very close...” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 186) That is to say, the Lord is closer to us than we are to ourselves.

Our real issue is to not be oblivious to the meanings of the above verses. We need to ensure that our hearts feel the elation of a constant togetherness with Allah (JJ). Once a believer acquires that state, virtually every inch of space will become a Kaba and show itself as a manifestation of the divine. Alternatively, the Almighty will open his path to deeds with rewards he could otherwise only obtain at the Kaba.

As the famous saying goes, the paths that deliver man to Allah (JJ) are as many as the breaths of all creatures. We simply need to be on the constant lookout for Allah's (JJ) pleasure.

One of the most beautiful of these pathways is to comfort and heal broken hearts, which are the focal points of the Almighty's gaze. **Molla Jami** (May Allah have mercy on him) says:

*The great pilgrimage is to win a heart
A heart is worth more than a thousand Kabas
The Kaba was built by Azer's son, Ibrahim
But the heart is where the Glorious gazes*

That being said, no act of worship has a substitute. Deeds that come with the reward of a pilgrimage still cannot replace the physical act of offering pilgrimage to the Kaba. Yet, there is a need to perform all deeds of worship, including pilgrimage, with the consciousness of being with the Lord.

Otherwise, acts of worship performed with a heart unmindful of Allah (J), erase not only their rewards but also their inspiration.

May the Almighty Allah deliver us all to piety and turn us into blissfully sincere people who remain loyal to their intentions until their very last breath.

Amin!...

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